





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



THE
PASTOR CHIEF;
OR,
THE ESCAPE OF THE VAUDOIS.
A TALE
OF
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

“LUX LUCET IN TENEBRIS.”

Vaudois Motto.

ON THE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

Avenge, O Lord! thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
E'en them, who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep; and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all th' Italian fields, where still doth away
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who, having learned thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

MILTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

CUNNINGHAM & MORTIMER, ADELAIDE STREET,
TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

TO
JOHN HUGHES, ESQ., M.A.

OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AND OF DONNINGTON PRIORY, BERKS,

THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED,

WITH SINCERE REGARD.



PREFACE.

IN venturing to lay the following tale before the public, it is with a diffidence of its merits, which renders me most solicitous to entreat indulgence: to account for some parts which may seem overstrained, by historical references, and to pay the tribute of gratitude to those sources from whence I was enabled to draw the interesting facts which induced me to choose a subject to which I deeply feel my inability to do justice.

The story was first suggested by reading Mr. Gilly's interesting narrative of the Waldenses; and the pleasure I derived from perusing it, was continued on meeting with Mr. Acland's account of the glorious recovery of the Valleys, by their pastor, Henri Arnaud: a man whom every bio-

grapher agrees in designating as alike remarkable for "his piety in the things of God and his judgment in those of earth."

According to the latter author, this extraordinary person, after conducting the affairs of his people with a skill which would have adorned a higher station, and subsequently (on their return to the valleys) serving the Duke of Savoy in the war with France, with the greatest zeal and fidelity, was persecuted by this prince, and falsely accused of a desire to inspire the Vaudois with a rebellious intention of forming a separate republic of their own; in consequence of which, he fled to Wirtemberg, where he died in the peaceful fulfilment of his pastoral office.

But, as his end is differently mentioned, or silently passed over by other historians, I have ventured to avail myself of the discrepancy to introduce an incident more suitable to the creation of my imagination. In other instances, though deeply sensible of the difficulty of blending fiction and historical truth, without compromising the dignity of the latter, I have adhered as strictly

as possible to the path pointed out by the most eminent historians; nor have I deviated from it, but in one other circumstance, when, with the bold consciousness of an author's licensed power, I have ventured to shorten by some years the life of the wife of Victor Amadeus, who was yet living in 1720.

In a translation of Bresse, entitled "Authentic Details of the Waldenses," I met with such interesting particulars as confirmed my desire to illustrate the history of this interesting people; and I am greatly indebted to the kindness of friends for the sight of some curious old works relating to them, now difficult of access. These documents gave me a greater insight into the habits, opinions, and expectations of this primitive sect, who build their belief of being the remnant of the true church, on the scriptural prophecies of part of the Revelations, whose accomplishment they declare may be traced in the annals of their history. According to Boyer they profess to have first received the tenets of their faith from the inspired lips of St. Paul himself, who is supposed to have visited

Spain from Italy, and going thither by land, must have passed through the Piedmontese valleys. From this earliest dawn of Christianity, they have kept free from the corruptions of every other sect.

To this day they have preserved a sort of Catechism in the vulgar tongue, dated 1100, called the “ Holy Lesson,” which is even now studied by them as articles of faith; and treatises are extant among them, dated the ninth century, principally by Bishop Claude of Turin, in which their divines disown the errors of the church of Rome. This firm adherence to their original form of worship in a later age, drew upon them repeated and violent persecution. The first open war denounced against them was under Pope Innocent the Eighth, in the fifteenth century, who assigned as a cause, the necessity of extirpating a people whose records were stained with the perpetration of every crime; but this calumny was not only refuted by their own sect, and disproved by the evidence of their pure and moral lives, but also by the confession of their adversary,

Claudius de Seissel, Archbishop of Turin, who in the year 1500 declared in a book he wrote, that "they lived in the world without reproach, observing the commandments of God."

These poor people endured thirty-three different wars, and yet maintained their position in the inheritance of their forefathers, till the year 1686, when they were formally expelled by the orders of Victor Amadeus, on pretence of non-compliance with his laws. These various persecutions are recorded by Perrin, Boyer, Gilles, and Léger. The two latter detail horrors from the repetition of which imagination shrinks; and they mention in glowing language, the gallant defence these poor people made under their brave leaders, Jayer and Gianavello, at Lucerne and Rora, in 1655; with descriptions of the fearful deeds of violation, mutilation, and empalement inflicted on them, the names of the sufferers, and the eyewitnesses of their martyrdom. The curious work of Léger is illustrated by drawings, which give a painful identity to the scenes described.

A renewal of these barbarities occurred in the last war under Victor Amadeus, and was nobly withstood, till, treachery being united to violence, the Vaudois fell into the snare laid for them, and underwent a captivity whose horrors exceed belief, and are related at full length by Boyer.

It is this period of their history that I have chosen for the subject of my tale; and if the hair-breadth escapes, and miraculous deliverances, it delineates, border too much on the improbable, I would entreat my readers to refer to the notes at the end of these volumes, or to the works above mentioned, and there see, that fiction has not exaggerated the records of history; and then, remembering the experience its annals give us of human nature, consider, whether with the proofs we have there, of the vast power of religious excitement to nerve the mind to the most surprising efforts, it is extraordinary, that the enthusiastic devotion and belief of these peasants should have enabled them (facilitated, too, on the other hand, by the weak prejudices of their bigoted adversaries) to perform the glorious enterprise by which

they regained possession of their valleys, and triumphing over every obstacle by their energy, obtained the rights and concessions granted to their forefathers?

The astute policy of Victor Amadeus, to which their interest was sacrificed, is mentioned by several historians; and the ambitious views of Louis XIV., who recognised no law but his own will in his imperious dictation to nations, is too well known and generally described to render it necessary to quote the authors from whom I received my impressions of his character.

“*Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History*,” “*Smollett's Continuation of Hume*,” and Mr. James's delightful work on the “*Life and Times of Louis XIV.*,” furnished me with many interesting particulars relative to the Vaudois, and to that period; while the flight of Victor Amadeus at the time of the battle of Turin, and the generous refuge afforded him in the Piedmontese valleys, is authenticated by Bresse and Boyer.

The history itself seemed to me replete with useful tendency, proving the power of *Faith and*

Perseverance, and holding out an example to incite the exercise of those energies which were bestowed for great and noble purposes. It only remains for me to add my desire, that I have not in my feeble attempts to illustrate it, dimmed its lustre; and trusting in the hope suggested by the Vaudois' own motto, that "Light shines out of darkness," fervently wish that its rays may cast a brightness over this production, and that the kindness of my readers will admit my apology for these first endeavours at obtaining their notice.

THE PASTOR CHIEF;

OR,

THE ESCAPE OF THE VAUDOIS.

CHAPTER I.

AMIDST the dark woods which clothe the steep mountains surrounding the little valley of Angrogna, you may distinctly trace the ivy-clad remains of a once proud Castle. The narrow windows and ponderous doors buried in deep embrasures, indicate at once the severity of the climate, and the rude disposition of the nation and age, that required such strong fortifications. In spite of these it was evident, that even the iron hand of time had pressed less heavily on its

architecture, than that more ruthless one of warlike violence, inflamed by the false doctrines of bigotry and superstition.

No traces of cultivation are discernible in its immediate environs, and the mournful accents of the restless wind, that howls through the untenanted apartments, seem alone to record the loss of their former inhabitants. Ruin and desolation had not always marked those splendid halls, and where the moss grew unheeded in its verdant beauty, and the owl broke the silence of the night by his wailing cry, the feet of the young had once beat time to the loud strain of gay music, and their voices echoed the joyous feelings of their careless hearts. But wilder sounds now usurped their place, and ere the bat and the owl had established themselves in the dwelling-place of the Counts of Solara, the cry of the persecuted Vaudois, and the groans of their murdered lords, shrilly sounded through its walls.

During almost unnumbered centuries, the ancient building had belonged to the family of Solara, who, originally of Roman extraction,

boasted they could trace their descent from the days when the Apostles boldly bore testimony to their crucified Lord amid the clamour of heathen superstition, and when, in spite of the opposition of false sects, the earlier converts took refuge in the valleys of Piedmont. Here, untainted by the delusive doctrines which in later ages sprung up with surprising vigour, they had maintained, from generation to generation, their simple and primitive tenets and morals, enduring with heroic fortitude, the oppression of the Papal dominion, until the edict of Nantes at length afforded them rest and protection.

Proudly had this race preserved themselves from any Romish connexion, till, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the last Court of Solara while travelling in the vicinity of Naples, beheld the beautiful Olivia of Castelluzzo, and, forgetful of the customs of his forefathers, persuaded her to flee from the restrictions of parental authority, and to share the privations of his mountain home.

Few were the days he passed with this lovely

bride, and these were imbittered, to both, by regret for the violation of their duties.

After one year, which but for this would have been of unmixed happiness, she died in giving birth to an infant girl, destined in after years, to recall to the father's heart the memory and the form he had so fondly loved.

With her latest breath, the dying mother blessed the child so dearly purchased, and recommended her to that Holy Virgin for the neglect of whose worship, she firmly believed herself now suffering — no arguments having prevailed to wean her from the religion in which she had been educated.

The anguish of the Count of Solara, was beyond control. Himself an only child, without any relation to share or console his grief, his path lay before him in all the gloom of uninterrupted solitude; while the bright being who had illuminated it, with the ray of affection, had sunk for ever in the darkness of the grave. Although his countrymen and the Vaudois were united to the holy tie of a similar faith, the con-

stitutional character of their nation prevented their sympathizing fully with the warmer passions of his Italian origin, or understanding the strength of a fascination that had drawn one of their sect to tolerate and witness the worship of a strange altar. With such feelings it was not to be expected that the death of the young Countess di Solara, or the sorrow of her survivor, should excite any very strong sympathy. One friend, however, the Vaudois Pastor of the adjacent valley, entered into his deep dejection, and while he pitied his grief, restrained its violence and directed its course, till it sought and found refuge in that harbour, which religion alone affords to the sad wreck of human affections.

In the exercises of devotion and in the education of his daughter, who was christened by the name of Anima, according to the ritual of the Vaudois church, in the tenets of which she was strictly instructed, the count recovered, though he could not forget the loss of his beloved wife.

Far different were the feelings of her father, the Marquis of Castelluzzo. The rage which

burst forth on finding that his youngest and favourite child, on whose beauty and talents his ambitious views of future aggrandizement were built, had fled from his paternal roof to the arms of an accursed and despised Vaudois, had just begun to subside into softer sentiments when the news of her death awoke a fresh and bitterer agony, and the idea that she had probably died a convert to the faith which he abhorred, weighed upon his mind, till its powers concentrated in a gloomy hatred of the Vaudois. To gratify this, he would have instigated the severest measures against them, had they not been protected by ancient treaties between the kings of France, and the reigning house of Savoy, which guaranteed the rights of the valleys of Pragela and Angrogna. Aware, however, that the issue of this ill-fated marriage still existed, he determined that when once Anima should have reached the age of reason, nothing should withhold her from his power, or from the cloister where he had resolved she should expiate her mother's crime, and if possible, redeem her soul from purgatory by constant acts of

prayer and penance; and he enjoined on his two remaining daughters, who had been educated in strict adherence to the church of Rome, the execution of his favourite scheme, should death interrupt his own projects, to find and convert his grandchild. The elder of these, early chose to devote herself to a monastic life, and the second, a woman of brilliant talents but devoid of personal advantages, formed an alliance with a near relation of the reigning Prince of Savoy, Victor Amadeus II.

To her the marquis principally confided the schemes he had formed for the young Anima di Solara, and to her he poured forth his invectives against the being who had seduced the darling of his heart from her allegiance, till sinking beneath the violence of his grief, he made her swear, on his deathbed, that no obstacle should prevent her from executing his last commands.

As if to favour this scheme, death deprived the unfortunate Anima, at the age of fifteen, of

parental protection, and she found herself without a friend to support her, except the same pastor who had comforted her father in his hour of sorrow, who had shared with him the cares of her education, and who at length had consigned him to that grave which, according to their simple protestant ritual, no tapers illuminated and no pompous effigy adorned, but where the flowers which the hands of filial piety had strewn, bloomed not the less fragrantly for the tears with which the orphan bedewed them. The last of her race, she was like the wild rose, which, when the stern blasts of winter have swept all its companions from the earth, will sometimes rear its delicate head, seeming to whisper to the mountain echo, "Where are they?" and the echo alone replies—"Where are they?"

Strong as had been the friendship which the pastor of Angregna had felt for the Count of Solara, it was yet warmer towards the child, whom he regarded as an almost sacred trust,

confided to his care and protection through the vicissitudes of a life threatened by unusual dangers.

The little Anima, early attracted by the benevolent aspect of her aged protector, had first won his love by the sprightly graces and natural loveliness of childhood, and in riper years by the sweetness of her character. She was the light and life of all around her; those whom her beauty won at first sight, were arrested by the still greater fascinations of her mind, and she seemed too fair, too bright for the rough path of life that lay before her.

The attractions of Anima were enhanced by the strong contrast afforded by her friend and constant companion, Arnaud's only daughter. Both in the bloom of youth, both lovely and amiable, were yet most different.

The dark beaming eye of her southern origin, true index of the strong feelings within, the elastic gait, the sparkling smile, and more than all, the sprightliness of mind, and poetry of feeling and imagination, characterized the one; while in the

other, a determination of purpose and loftiness of character, derived from a sense of the deep injuries of her native land, inspired almost awe, while it won admiration.

Each was in turn the support of the other ; the world, with its vanities and cares, penetrated not the recesses of their Alpine valleys to disturb the purity of their girlish conferences, but a more powerful passion had found its way, and left a sting behind.

It was the earnest wish of the pastor of the Alps that Anima should find a more permanent, if not a kinder protector than himself; for to his experienced eye, the horizon was charged with clouds which threatened to break over his protestant flock, and as he became aware of old age creeping upon him, he felt for the helpless lamb who must seek a stranger's care at the very time, perhaps, when even the firmest ties of nature would be insufficient to withstand the dread torrent, once more likely to inundate these valleys.

To seek after worldly advantages would have

been contrary to the pastor's character and his pure and spiritual pursuits; he only desired a mind congenial to that of his ward, and a heart devoted to the Vaudois cause; and both these were united in his friend, and former pupil, Walter Durand: nor was it without pleasure that he perceived that the young man was not insensible to her attractions. But who shall presume to guide the course of those strong affections which influence the destiny of man. Arnaud, while wishing to give a bias to Walter's affections, little thought whose path of life would be blasted by the withering breath of disappointed love.

Unacknowledged, even to herself, the still poison had crept into the bosom of his child—his Marie. From infancy she had been the companion of Walter, the sharer of all his thoughts; nor was it till she heard the pastor talk of him as the husband of another, and that other her dearest friend, that she discovered how necessary he had become to herself: nor even then could

she analyze the feelings which the words of her father had first brought to light.

Educated in his earlier life by the pastor, Durand's mind had been nourished from the best and purest sources of knowledge which the scanty library (the national property confided to the Barbes or pastors) afforded. The means indeed were small, and not calculated to impart much classical lore, yet they were sufficient to refine and elevate a mind which nature had fitted to receive the precious seed.

An orphan, whilst yet a child, he enjoyed but little inheritance beside the sword of honour presented to his grandsire by Gustavus Adolphus, the documents of an unstained pedigree, and the memory of virtuous parents.

To carve out his own fortune was then the destiny and desire of young Walter; and for this purpose he resolved to follow his family profession, and, taking service in the French army hoped, by emulating the brave officers whose valour like that of Bayard had raised them to a

proud eminence, to adorn the stock from whence he sprung.

But alas! prejudice had turned the current of popular favour, and success was incompatible with the maintenance of opinions his ancestors had stoutly preserved, and in which he gloried. No exertion could overcome the obstacles which bigotry threw in the path of his success; and, thwarted in his most ardent hopes, the young man returned to his native land, to behold with indignation the same system of persecution under which he writhed, carried out yet more grossly amongst his dearest and earliest haunts.

From these painful observations the toils of the chase afforded a momentary dissipation, and in hairbreadth escapes and wild adventures, the eager hunter sought vent for the raging passions which boiled within his breast.

Some years older than Marie, Durand was dearer for this to one whose reflective mind enabled her to sympathize in the deep purposes of manhood, which the state of the country now roused in the breasts of the Vaudois, whose sense

of present evil was rendered still more acute by the remembrance of past injuries.

Their religion was a crime, a bar to success in every profession, an obstacle even to domestic enjoyment. The doors of learning were closed against them, and the declaration of their tenets forbade all military promotion, even if earned in the service of their oppressors. Condemned to waste their strength in tilling an unprofitable soil, its hard-earned produce was exposed to the capricious taxation of Savoy; and too often under the pretence of levying the unjust tribute, were their dwellings invaded by ruthless soldiers, who, whether pertaining to the forces of France or Savoy, alike asserted their right of quartering themselves on them, and of exercising a brutal violence which they dared not resist.

Noble in spirit, but degraded to the condition of slaves, hard necessity alone restrained the hands which burned to break their fetters, and but for the support of their sincere devotion, their hearts would have burst beneath the galling yoke which they were unable to shake off.

Some of the older inhabitants indeed, soured by adversity, whispered that the time was come for action, and many a young cragsman, as he pursued his wild prey on the mountain heights, exercised his strength to the uttermost in fond anticipation of a more important game.

Levelled by oppression and confiscation of property to a common station, it was the mind alone, with the memory of better days, that preserved the difference of caste, and raised above the herd of peasants, who alike were nerved by hardship, and purified by self-denial, the few master spirits who rose, as it were, to the surface—embryo leaders in a future great cause.

The evening on which this story commences, a party of peasants had assembled on the ridge of Vacherè, where a few huts of stone formed the temporary abode of some hardy mountaineers, who endeavoured during the summer months to force the bare hills of rough slate to produce a scanty crop of hemp or corn; whilst the women occupied themselves in tending the silkworms, which they hoped would prove a source of future profit, the

intervals, of following the plough, were filled up by the men in pursuing the game which abounded on the heights above, whence they frequently brought back the coveted spoils of the chamois, or the still wilder bonquetin, an animal the most daring and active of its species, sometimes mistaken for the ibex, and admirably calculated in make and shape for the region it frequents, and sometimes the loup cervier, whose destruction formerly, entitled them to a government reward—a fee, however, which had long been withheld.

The labours of the day were over, and the young men had elevated in front of the principal dwelling a sort of target, against which they were exercising their skill and the range of their rifles with the excitement of emulation.

As success crowned each effort, a shout of triumph acknowledged it, and the women drew near to applaud and stimulate them to reaction.

“Well done, Jean Frache!” was the cry, as his ball repeatedly pierced the mark; “there is but one who could have excelled thy last shot!”

“And he,” replied the successful marksman, “would fain leave us for foreign service!”

“Ay! and prove,” cried an old man from among the spectators, “the noble stock from whence he sprung; but Providence retains him here for a better cause; he is too good for the flat countries of the Papist *mange-rôtis*, and born and bred in these valleys, he will testify the superiority of their soil.”

Again the sharpshooting was renewed, and then succeeded a game requiring more muscular strength, in which the competitors strove to hurl an iron bar of considerable weight against a stout pile of wood; but one after another tried in vain, nor, though they put forth their utmost strength, could any approach the mark. Again Jean Frache was the nearest to success, but falling short of the actual point, he retreated, exclaiming, with disappointment, that the distance was too great, and adding—

“No human arm, not even that of your favourite Durand, could accomplish it; and I

defy any to hurl this bar beyond the spot I reached."

"See, here he comes!" cried another, as the figure of a young huntsman was seen on the crags above, over which he leaped, disdainful of the easier path hewn in the rocks through stunted bushes and chestnut-plants which led to the heights, where he had been following the chase; "he will soon try if it be impossible."

Not over pleased, Jean Frache, however, submitted to the trial with as good a grace as he could assume, and all turned to Durand, begging him to join their sports.

At first the young man refused, urging the lateness of the hour, the length of route yet between him and Angrogna; but when they pressed him to make but one effort to settle their doubts, he laid aside his hunting implements, and stripping himself to the waist, displayed a frame whose round and sinewy proportions denoted the strength acquired by constant exercise.

For a moment he stooped to raise the bar which

the others had tottered beneath, and poising it in his grasp, bent backwards to collect the strength of every nerve ; then, hurling it far before him, watched it, as it whizzed through the air, and dashing against the pile of wood recoiled with the force of the blow, while with a spring like that of the wild animal on its prey, he rushed to catch it at a rebound, and flung it far beyond the mark.

“ Now find it, friends,” he cried, panting with the exertion ; and, with swollen muscle, he again resumed his hunting-dress, without waiting to hear the applause the feat excited, and pursued his way with a hurried step, but not ere he had approached the elder group, and whispered, “ The French are at hand, bid these youngsters disperse, and retire quietly to your huts, unless you would provoke their insults.”

It was enough, the evening amusement was at an end ; all were about to profit by the advice, when the hoarse voice of a man was heard crying, “ Yes, children, you do well, the day of vengeance is at hand, prepare for the execution,

and the Philistines will again flee before the people of the Lord."

"It is Le Bonquetin," said Jean Frache, "his words are prophetic;" but ere the speaker came in sight, an uncouth being approached them.

It was a stunted youth, whose appearance was yet that of premature old age; his features wizen, his head preposterously large, covered with red and matted hair, round, vacant eyes, whose fixed expressionless stare declared the idiocy of a wavering mind.

Pulling his finger from his mouth he pointed to the ridge, and muttered some unintelligible sounds, but "*Soldats*" seemed their burden, and then, bursting into an infant's piteous wail, ran for protection to the crowd.

At this moment, a strange figure leaped the fence surrounding the spot: a man long past the prime of life, whose appearance denoted the fantastic spirit which animated it. His large-boned and muscular frame, thickset rather than corpulent, took from his height, which little exceeded the common standard. His hair, grizzled

with age, shadowed a forehead high but wrinkled and scarred in former conflicts. His eyebrows shaggy, and almost meeting above the piercing gray eyes, gave a ferocious expression to a countenance marked by strong features, whilst the large mustache and bushy whiskers, together with the remains of a former uniform which was superadded to the mountaineer's usual hunting-dress, indicated the profession of arms he had followed in his youth.

He drew the disgusting object towards him with a tenderness of manner strangely at variance with the general indications of his appearance, and bent on him a gaze of kindness, which showed that *there* had centred all the tenderness of a nature changed by persecution, and warped from its original tendency.

"Hush ! hush ! poor Pierre," said he soothingly, as he led the Crétin away, "I know, and thou art safe." After this the whole party quietly and rapidly dispersed.

Alas ! poor Pierre, he was the idiot offspring of the husband of Le Bonquetin's sister, a stout

mountaincer who had fallen at Rora in the massacre of 1663, leaving his widow to her brother's care, which, however, had been unavailing to preserve her from the barbarities perpetrated by the troops of Charles Emanuel of Savoy. She died in giving birth to this child, raving in madness caused by the horrors she had both witnessed and experienced. Her babe was the last memorial of a whole race swept away in that dark tide of persecution. What wonder then, that he was so dear to Onfroi Vigano, or, (as he was more generally termed among the mountaineers) Le Bonquetin, an appellation bestowed on him in compliment no less to his daring exploits in the chase, than in memory of the courage and activity which had signalized his bearing when, in the days of his youth, he had nobly fought beside Giavanello, and shared with him the honour of keeping at bay, both at Rora and Lucerne, the troops of the Marquesses of Henri and Angrogna.

In the blood-stained annals of that dreadful period were recorded, with the hero's deeds of

valour, the torture and destruction of all they held dear; and while the memory of those horrors pressed even to distraction on Vigano's brain, yet the last remnant that was left to him of the past, in his unhappy nephew, was fondly cherished; and the evidences of a once kindly nature thus revealed, gave him an interest in the eyes of his countrymen, which the stern ferocity of his manners otherwise might have repelled; and Le Bonquetin, though somewhat dreaded, was a general favourite among the mountaineers.

CHAPTER II.

AT the foot of one of the rugged mountains that form a principal feature in the scenery of Piedmont, rushes a small but rapid stream, in whose clear waters you may count every pebble which breaks its progress, and gives a romantic sound to its murmuring waves as they glide on to a point where they are intercepted by sharp rocks. For several yards its windings may be traced, till lost amid the unchecked luxuriance of the wild vines and brambles, connected with the adjacent wood.

It was summer, and the setting sun illuminated the distant trees, and gave a richer hue to their foliage; while the shades of evening deepening

over the shore and reflecting every image in lengthened shadows on the opposite height, gave diversity to a scene that might otherwise have seemed monotonous: so still, so fair it lay in a silence only broken by the soft gurgling of the waters; every bird had sought its rest, the chamois even had ceased to leap the heights above; neither the distant low of cattle, nor home returning peasants, disturbed the silence of a spot which seemed fitted for the ancient Ghebirs' worship of the bright luminary he adores.

Two figures now appeared. One, that of a man, whose hunting-dress, soiled and torn in various parts, denoted the roughness of his late occupation, though on closer inspection it revealed a more minute attention to its general equipments than was customary with the Alpine followers of the chase, and indicated a desire to please by softer arts, or perhaps the civilization of a gentler mode of life and higher caste than theirs. By his side was suspended a stout *couteau de chasse*, of which the horn handle and tough blade showed it to be no slight weapon of defence; and in his

hand was a long rifled carbine, an heirloom, which ere this had been tried on nobler prey than the fleet chamois its owner had lately pursued, regardless of the perilous paths and fearful chasms over which the excitement of his sport had led. It is true, no booty hung on the muscular shoulder of the young hunter to testify his success, but the yet reeking frontlet and shining horns of the prey he had taken were suspended to his belt, and these he was unfastening to lay at the feet of the female who met him, whose fragile appearance contrasted with his own stalwart frame.

Ethereal in her delicacy, the light buoyant spirit which danced in her dark eye, with a brilliancy which rivalled the gazelle's, and the elastic step with which she advanced towards him, showed how welcome was his return.

“ And is this all the spoil thou hast brought, faint-hearted huntsman, after thy long absence?” said she, tauntingly addressing him, “ no chamois hide for winter use ? no venison for the pastor's evening meal ? Shame on thee, Durand, for thy sloth,”—but as she spoke, she raised the trophy

her words contemned, and the arch smile which lit up her countenance more than repaid the young man, who gazed on her with passionate admiration.

At length he replied—"Blame me not, Anima, I have been no idler in the chase, nor shrunk from the wildest path in search of some tribute for thee; nor, when my object was gained, and the gasping chamois lay at my feet, did I stagger beneath the burden I longed to bring to thee, but," he continued with an altered tone, and an expression wherein fierce indignation mingled with deep regret, "that tribute was required by urgent want; such want, Anima, as may it never be thy fate to witness!"

His change of manner awoke her curiosity, and she eagerly inquired to what he alluded.

"How shall I wound thy gentle heart?" he answered, "by describing the scenes I have beheld, or terrify thy imagination with the forebodings such tales must awaken? Alas! the timid animal has not more cause to flee from the huntsman's hot pursuit than the Vaudois peasant from

the sworn prince and protector, to whom he has paid a too faithful allegiance, and whose emissaries wring from his necessities the crust he toils to procure, leaving him and his starving family to cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance with the last expiring groan of famine!

“Chance directed my steps to a hut, where such violence had been but lately perpetrated, nor could I refuse the booty I had destined for thee, to the victims of Savoy’s persecution. Would that it had been mine to give a stronger aid!—Would that the contents of this weapon,” he added, clenching the carbine with a firmer grasp, “had been in time to rescue the oppressed and find another mark than that at which it was aimed!”

A third person soon joined them, and watched the speaker with serious attention; but his words had caused such visible alarm in the fair creature he addressed, that forgetting, in anxiety for her, the deep thoughts which stirred his soul, he sought to dissipate her fears by changing the subject; and tracing his morning route, he told the

dangers he had passed. And though at times a sudden outburst revealed the impetuous feelings which could not be repelled, he gently led her thoughts from the dark current of his own, and she smiled once more, gazed confidingly in his face, and banished each gloomy impression which had for a moment dimmed the brightness of her beauty.

He spoke of peril, and she shuddered; of his prowess, and she smiled; of the Alpine path he had trodden, the game he had pursued, and the rosy dawn he had watched on those heights, and contrasted it with the glories of the setting sun, whose light now extended over the mountains, and in dying lent fresh beauty to their peaks.

“Yes!” said she, “’tis beautiful, indeed, but not to my mind so lovely as the bright morning light which will succeed; for the one seems to frown at the day which is gone, while the other welcomes with smiles its successor’s birth. Nay,” she added, “those blood-red clouds, which will shortly eclipse its hues of gold, seem portentous of evil to the young day which will arise. To-

morrow," she continued with a smile, "I challenge you to meet me on yonder golden peak and salute the rising morn, instead of rudely persecuting the chamois and wilder bouquetin."

The young man answered not the joyous invitation, as he was wont; but with a more serious aspect, said—"Anima, Heaven grant your words may not be ominous; but even as yon setting sun sinks beneath the dusky cloud, so are these Alpine valleys sinking beneath the power of their oppressors!"

"But even thus," interposed the last person who had joined them, "even thus, these Alpine valleys, from their last glimmering ashes, will send forth a light to cheer the surrounding mountains, and will testify that the fire of devotion lighted their possessor's path to another world, bright, pure, and, though dimmed, unquenched."

At this moment, one of the last rays lit up the speaker's face, and revealed the expression which her enthusiasm had kindled, beaming forth with a majesty which declared from how deep a source it sprung.

He whom she addressed, however, caught not the inspiration from her lips, but answered with averted eye.

“The hearths of our unforgotten ancestors will be dyed in blood once more, and”—

“Shame on thee, Durand,” said the girl, “Nobly they preserved our faith, and boldly will we maintain it.”

“Would that the time were come!”—he returned, unconsciously grasping his carbine.—“Meantime, while the power of the mighty pours the tide of oppression over our valleys, the heart sickens and the spirit refuses to assist the hands to labour; the struggle of contention, the bold contest of man with man were far preferable to this. There are lands, Marie, in the tropic zone, where human strength and human blood are sold for money, and their exertions swell the luxuries of the rich; the power of their youth is spent in the acquisition of produce they must never taste, and the casket of their dearest possessions is rifled by their tyrant’s violence. We, too, are sold; we, men of iron lith and limb, of the purest and

hardiest old Christian stock, are sold—sold to increase the pomp of the licentious Louis, whose minions snatch from our mouths the hard-earned subsistence, and whose soldiers violate the sanctity of our hearths, and then laugh at our indignation! And our pastor bids us suffer, and be still; and preaches the meek lesson of submission to bold hunters and cragsmen smarting beneath undeserved aggression, with hearts burning, and hands ready for self-defence. What said thy father but yesternight, Marie, when the envoy from Savoy brought heavier restrictions on the few rights left to us, and confirmed our fears with accounts of fresh persecutions in the valleys? ‘Be still and submit.’ Still and submit!—As well bid the sea beyond those mountain-tops cease from its raging, or stop the headlong avalanche in its career, as tell us to bear in quiet these accumulated ills. Ills to which no fettering allegiance to Louis can enforce the submission of men, who, distinct in their genealogy and their faith, own no tie of brotherhood with his savage Provençals, and, in whom, obedience would be dastardy,

deserving the persecution which has so lately drenched the mountains of Cevennes in blood. No ! it is time to profit by the sad warning of our brethren in faith, and yet nobly lift up the hand of might in defence of our rights and our families !”

A pause followed, and neither broke the silence of thoughts too deep for words ; till Marie observed that the sun had now wholly sunk, and the darkened sky announced that the hour of the evening meeting was come, and they must obey the pastor’s summons.

It was an impressive scene that opened on the eyes of the young party as they reached the summit of the acclivity, and looked down a deep gorge between hanging rocks, whose rugged points, emerging from the wild vine, glittered in the evening rays. About half way down the mountain was a mossy sward, some fifty feet wide, sheltered by wooded rocks, which shelved down to that same brook they had just left so placid on the other side, now dashing and foaming over the rocks that broke its current. Yet not alone the waters’ rush disturbed the stillness of the hour,

but the footsteps of several Vaudois peasants, leaping from the heights above or hurrying up the ascent beneath.

These were the protestants of the early church coming to perform their evening sacrifice; and beautiful was it to see the hoary head of old age and the comeliness of youth, met in no consecrated building, whose stately pillars and storied aisle attested the pride of human skill, but beneath the glorious canopy of heaven, resplendent with the indescribable brilliancy of a thousand hues, and, within the massive enclosure of the Alpine rocks. All now was still—one deep clear voice alone rang clear through the hushed multitude, and accompanied by many a silent prayer, ascended on the wings of Faith. It was again a beautiful sight—that prostrate crowd, that scenery, and the venerable form of the old man, who, with simple and energetic devotion, poured forth the supplication of the Vaudois flock for deliverance from the yoke of tyranny, and for protection in the hour of need.

The appearance of Arnaud was calculated to

inspire attention and respect. His figure, rather above the common height, was such as might have realized the imagination of the first apostolic preacher of Christianity, and the holy subjects of his constant meditation had given an elevated expression to his countenance, which awed, rather than commanded, all beholders. It might have been deemed stern, but Christian love had softened even the resentment which his country's sufferings had awakened, and lent a milder lustre to the bright eye which beamed from beneath a bushy and thick set brow. His age did not in truth bear proportion to its signs, for deep thought and ardent anxiety, rather than years, had ploughed the furrows on his cheek, and prematurely changed the hue of the once dark and clustering locks.

Some passages were read, and listened to, with the serious attention that a deep value of the privilege, of which bigotry would fain have deprived them, well merited; and then the congregation was dismissed, their hearts full of the holy feelings the ceremony had engendered.

Some had many a weary mile before them;

their path lay across dark and dangerous regions, but these could not deter the Vaudois from discharging so dear a duty, the performance of which was attended by so many difficulties: for it was only by night, and after a day of labour, that they could hold their meetings undisturbed.

The light of day had now wholly disappeared, nevertheless several persons remained in communion with the pastor, and most of these were elder mountaineers, whose sinewy frames had waxed strong in athletic exercise during many a long year of hardship, or younger men, whose ardent spirits were chafing beneath a sense of oppression, and who longed to exert the active strength they both gloried in, against the overbearing agents of the court of Savoy.

“Friends,” said Henri Arnaud, to those around him, “once more we have met in prayer and peace: blest privilege, whose limits, alas, may be already fixed! but, if you have entered into the spirit of long suffering and forbearance this evening’s lecture inculcated, the moment is at hand to prove its effect by remem-

bering that our afflictions are from a power above that of man, against whose weapons we may not rebel, but bow in childlike submission. The bitter draught is sent from God, and it is not for us to quarrel with the hand which ministers it, but, believe me, the effects will be salutary; and though invisible here, they will be apparent in the bright light of eternity!"

A shudder, more of indignation than of fear, ran through the circle at the import of these words, and an indistinct murmur showed how unpalatable was the doctrine of forbearance he preached.

Arnaud, however, continued, "A messenger from Savoy arrived last night with fresh requisitions from his court and that of France. Some are, indeed, hard to comply with, some impossible; but as far as we can, children, we will submit, ay—submit," repeated the speaker, with a tone of dignified authority, which showed that the decision sprung from no weakness of purpose. "Submit, not to the word of princes, but to the will of God!

“In the first place, his highness imposes heavier taxation, to be paid monthly at the fortress of La Tour, even the tithe of our possessions; and should that fail in making up the stipulated sum, the deficiency is to be made good in corn or provision; or in default of this, our dwellings will be confiscated to the Duke of Savoy, and subjected to the inquisition of his emissaries.”

“Say rather,” cried an indignant voice, “the unrestrained licence of his soldiery!”

“Nay, my son,” continued the pastor, “forestall not our misery, but prepare to meet it with more cheerful hope. The next order has been complied with already, only our oppressors forgot when they ordered us to raze our churches, that our Divine Master had prepared himself ‘*a building not made with hands*,’ in which we may still and ever worship him, and pour forth our gratitude for thousand blessings left! One more remains to be told—but how shall I declare the bitter, the iniquitous decrees, which I feel is already

rejected unheard; for I know that the Vaudois, who patiently paid, with the sweat of his brow, the Tax his prince demanded, will firmly refuse to his oppressor the sacrifice of his helpless offspring to a Romish Baptism !”

At these words a wild cry rose from the assembly, and resounded from rock to rock ; the valleys echoed it, and proclaimed to the slumberers in their homes that the war cry had awoken, and would not again be hushed.

The pastor spoke once more: “ My children, if we refuse obedience, penalties hitherto unexperienced are threatened, a devastating army will sweep through our valleys and once more bathe them in bloodshed and flames, and the babes whom we have refused to surrender to their papal ceremonies will lie murdered beside their mothers !”

“ Better torture than apostacy; better death here than punishment hereafter !” shouted Durand, and the response passed from lip to lip in answer to that black edict of persecution.

“Vaudois, ye are right!” exclaimed the pastor, with gleaming eyes. “Blessed are the hearts that in danger and in death still cling to the banner of their faith; blessed the worthy children of those forefathers who centuries ago preserved the same tenets amid torture and famine, and bequeathed them us to defend to the last drop of our blood. But while we are firm, we must be forbearing, and let the first act of aggression be on the oppressor’s side. We conform not to their will: no, we buy not our safety with our children’s souls, but yet we will patiently await their dread vengeance!”

A dissentient murmur rose at these words, and one voice above the rest spoke the feelings of the multitude, in its own indignant renunciation of the proposed submission.

“It is too late now,” was the cry, “to talk of endurance. The dying reptile will turn against the foot that crushes it, and shall the hand of the brave be still, while the oppressor wrenches his dearest possession from his home, and pollutes

his hearth with his life blood and disgrace? No! the arm given by a merciful Providence for the protection of the weak, must not remain inactive; and with the strength of Gideon in the hour of need, we will up and smite the tyrant who has no right of compulsion over this free land."

As he spoke, Durand raised his hand on high, and with an eye flashing with anticipated success, challenged his companions to dissent from his words. A shout, long, loud, and repeated, answered the appeal, and threatened vengeance to Savoy; but the pastor with uplifted hand commanded silence.

Then turning to Durand with a look he had never witnessed before, and which might have befitted the expression Moses wore when he broke the golden calf, bade him by his faith, by the love he owed his countrymen, to repress his untimely violence, nor stir, nor speak, till they had conferred in private.

Not easily could the young man restrain the fiery impatience of his exasperated spirit, but there was that in the master mind of the aged

pastor which enforced obedience, and though chafing at the curb, his bursting wrath was awed into silence.

Again the pastor bade his flock be still, for there was time to consult and decide on their best course ere the edict should be enforced; and for this purpose he appointed a meeting on the same spot the following night.

The party then dispersed; and the moon, whose silvery light danced on the waters beneath, lighted the sad pilgrims home to relate to the grayheaded parent the news of that evening meeting, or to whisper a hope, they dared not cherish, to the trembling wife, and sigh over the sleeping infant at her breast, for whose sake the dark tide of desolation would soon inundate their valleys. Meanwhile the heavens smiled and the moon shone with unclouded lustre, over the beating hearts and despairing bosoms of the inhabitants of Angrogna.

Heedless of the advance of night, the pastor with his family did not retire to rest, for the messenger from Victor Amadeus had not only brought

tidings of vital importance to the general welfare of the inhabitants of the valleys, but also letters of deep interest to his own household. Madame de Saony had written to assert the claims of relationship over her niece, Mademoiselle de Solara; and her letter, backed by the order of the duke, directed that the latter should be conveyed under the safeguard of his passport to the confines of the valleys, where an escort would meet and convey her to the care of her aunt. The time for her departure was mentioned; and every means used to ensure compliance.

It was Arnaud's business to communicate these unexpected tidings, but conscious of the agony it would inflict, it was not till he had sought some degree of composure in the privacy of prayer that he could attempt to deal the blow. Then, strengthened by the aid he had so earnestly sought, and in some measure relieved by shedding a few tears, which anguish for others wrung from his bosom, he entered the little apartment where Durand and Marie awaited him with Anima, and summoning the former to him, revealed at once the

stern decree which blighted each fairy vision and each experienced joy.

“ My son,” said he, grasping the young man’s hands in his, as, on hearing the communication, Durand vehemently declared no force should tear the loved one from their arms, “ by your father’s memory I command you to hear me, and to forego this vain, this frantic opposition. Recollect their strength and ours, the folly of a struggle which could not rescue and must lose, not only ourselves but the common cause, the lives and liberties of all in these valleys; then ask yourself if you have a right, for the sake of this one tender lamb, however dear, to endanger the safety of the whole flock. Unprovided with arms, or any means of defence, impoverished by oppression and weakened by want, how can we hope to maintain a successful opposition against the well-armed and disciplined troops whom Victor can command to punish our non-compliance—against the mighty armies of France, infuriated by the demon of of bigoted persecution, the spirit of antichrist, now hovering on the borders of these valleys? Nay,

my son, not thus must we endanger the precious deposit of our faith!"

"Endanger!" exclaimed Durand. "Is not that deposit our safeguard? Will not God defend us for its sake? Is not his power the same as when the walls of Jericho sunk before the trumpet's blast, and the men of Amalek fled before the sword of the Lord and of Gideon?"

"True, my son," replied the pastor, "but that was in their country's cause, not for their own individual interest. This sacrifice must be made, because it is the will of God, and readily, because in the sovereign's voice that will is declared, and perhaps in mercy to her whom we could not defend, in the dark storm which is already gathering in the distance, and will ere long break in fearful violence on our devoted heads. Then, when the shriek of our massacred brethren, of our violated women, pierce our ears, how should we reproach ourselves with the shortsightedness which withheld her from the sanctuary of refuge he had prepared, to share horrors we may be incapable of guarding her from. No, Durand—Anima must

go—our love for her were best shown in accelerating her departure, and veiling from her sight the anguish which could but increase her own. This night—this very night; nay, no remonstrance, for it must be so—she goes, and I—I alone will deliver her to the care of her new attendants, because I alone feel strength to subdue the selfish grief, the expression of which would only add fresh agony to what she must experience.”

In motionless silence Durand heard, and then unclasping the hands in which he had buried his face, looked up with so changed, so ghastly an expression, that it showed, without the aid of words, how exquisite had been the torture inflicted; and then he faltered forth—

“ Father, I submit—but oh ! let me behold once more the form I fancied already mine. No sigh shall declare the anguish of my bursting heart—no exclamation betray the stern resolve with which it burns. Let me seal but once on those dear lips the feelings which henceforth must only exist as for the dead, and hereafter, this life, this arm, is yours to mould as you will. Behold,” he con-

tinued, “ my solemn pledge : by the deathbed of my father—by the sword and the renown of my grandsire, I swear that I will calmly see, ay, and calmly part from Anima.”

A pause ensued, and then the pastor replied, “ It shall be so, thy word is pledged!—that sacred word, none of thy race c’er broke, and thou shalt share with me the few moments that Mademoiselle di Solara can pass under this roof!”

Durand pressed his hand with fervent gratitude and whispered—“ Trust me, but pray for me; when all is over, I may be able to pray too, but now my prayer would be turned into sin; it would be for the day of battle, and revenge, and that speedily; for as the parched traveller thirsts for the desert spring, so does this heart for bayonet and ball—for wounds and death—for aught in which to vent the bursting agony of a crushed spirit! The struggle has long been hovering near, and now is at hand. Then, when the dark hour comes, let those beware who have torn me from earthly ties, and thus strengthened me with the savage desire of the bereaved tigress in her

den! Perchance 'tis best thus. Happiness—such happiness as I looked forward to, might have unmanned this heart; and while my destiny calls to deeds of blood, her gentle nature will be safe!—but oh! my father—feel for me—with me.”

“My son—I do, and see in thee, how thus God forms his chosen champions; bear but this bitter test, his gift, and thou provest thyself our sword and shield in a less fearful contest. And now, come, and help me to the hard task of breaking these tidings to their tender hearts, so that they may bear the blow, nor sink beneath it. Come now, I dare not delay;” and linking his arm in the young man’s, the pastor led him to the room where the two friends awaited him.

But how describe the grief this unexpected blow inflicted, cutting at the root of every cherished prospect and every present joy? Marie’s unselfish grief! Anima’s earnest entreaties to be protected in some concealment where she might yet enjoy in privacy the blessing of communion with all to which her young affections clung! the pastor’s deep struggle to maintain his firm refusal

to her heart-searching prayers, and the stern composure with which Durand redeemed his vow, while his heart was wrung with an anguish none could fathom?

No delay was to take place in the immediate surrender of his ward. Arnaud, well aware that all appearance of opposition would only endanger the general welfare without promoting hers, and feeling he had no right to sacrifice the interest of the community to individual ties, steeled himself against every persuasion. He sought refuge in the reflection that thus only could the charge his dying friend had bequeathed him, be preserved from the horrors he perceived were at hand; and he hurried on the necessary preparations for her departure.

Well was it for Anima that time was denied for those harrowing regrets with which we look for the last time on scenes rendered familiar by every dear and early association, and which henceforth we must learn to picture under so different a garb! Well for her companions that then, at least, imagination had no leisure to presage forth

that future in which she was no longer to bear a part! Well that neither knew in the last fond embrace the change that must pass over their hearts ere again they would meet in that dear communion! Well for us all that the veil which in our shortsightedness we often desire to lift, falls over the years yet to come!

Arnaud and Durand accompanied Anima to the spot which Madame de Saony had appointed; and it was in happy unconsciousness of all around her that the pastor placed Anima in the hands of her new attendants, and rejoiced in his heart that there is a point at which physical strength, in mercy fails, before that of mental suffering!

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Mademoiselle de Solara recovered from the fainting-fit which had preserved her from the last bitter moment of parting, and found herself in the hands of strangers, the terror and distress which every fresh sensation increased, threw her into a succession of hysterical fits, which only yielded to intervals of stupor; and the consequent exhaustion, together with the exertion of rapid and continued travelling, to which she was so wholly unused, distressed her nervous system to a degree which produced severe illness; and by the time she reached the

Château de Saony, she was no longer capable of either understanding her present, or regretting her former condition. But though disfigured by illness, and almost lifeless when borne into her aunt's apartments, Madame de Saony was struck by the rare beauty of her unknown niece, so different from what she expected, as well as by the marked likeness to the sister she had loved and lost; and it was with deep self-reproach, that she witnessed the effects of her own thoughtless and hurried arrangement, in the total unconsciousness from which, she vainly strove to rouse her, and from which at last she woke, but with the scream of delirium.

Days passed, and still each endeavour to restore the sufferer was in vain. Every care was lavished upon her, and the power of medicine tried to its utmost; but still Madame de Saony was doomed to gather, from the unconscious ravings of her niece, the history of her life, and to hear from the physicians' lips their fears that these would only subside in the silence of death, or the far more dreadful indifference of imbecility.

Thus indeed was her father's meditated revenge accomplished on the sister whose memory she so dearly loved.

In the most affecting tones would Anima address her by all the names of all she loved in Angrogna; would summon her to her favourite haunts, or sing the Vaudois hymns her pastor guardian had taught her; and then breaking wildly off, would shriek with sudden fear. At length, after protracted anxiety, the sad scene seemed drawing to its close, and Anima, worn out by the paroxysms of delirium, sunk into a state of torpor, the presage of approaching death. But who shall limit nature's power in the constitution of youth! To the surprise of all, Anima unclosed her eyes and gazed around with the look of restored understanding. Forgetful of all that had passed since the day she left Angrogna, she called in tremulous accents on Marie Arnaud, and looking for a reply, perceived all strange around her.

A sweet, low voice, by her side, bade her be still and fear nothing, for that Marie would ere long

be with her; and thus from day to day they deceived her into a hope that her early friends would come. But this deception could not long be continued, and when gradually rising from its childlike weakness, her mind recovered its tone, the reality of her new position was painfully forced upon her by every surrounding circumstance,. But Madame de Saony possessed tact in an eminent degree, and with a strong interest in the object of success, she unremittingly bent every faculty to the purpose of weaning her niece from the memory of early associations. Everything in the Château de Saony, formed a contrast to the former experience of Anima's life.

Poverty had deprived the inhabitants of Angrogna of every luxury. Learning was entirely confined to the pastor's fireside, and the plainest habits characterized their fare and clothing. Cheerful and happy, because ever actively employed, they desired no artificial stimulus to gaiety. Simple in their wants and sufficient to supply these to themselves, they were assisted, but not served.

Strange, therefore, to Anima, appeared the whole routine of her new existence.

The simple apartment which she and Marie Arnaud had shared, furnished in the simplest manner, and owning no ornament but the glorious prospect the window discovered of a landscape, where nature revelled in beauty, where on stupendous mountains, wild rocks, and tumbling waterfalls, the divine wisdom was marked, who had consecrated the whole to the protection of a persecuted flock—the uncurtained couch which for years had pillowed her head in placid sleep, unbroken by fevered dreams or haunting cares; how different was it all, from the spacious apartment she now occupied, with its polished floors, its crimson draperies, and gilded lamps, whose light burst in gloomy contrast with the pale moonbeams she had loved to gaze on, streaming from the spangled sky—a numerous body of attendants, anticipating the slightest wish and waiting to administer necessities till now unheard of!

All this wearied and distressed her; and with a

perplexed mind she ever watched, with anxious and still deluded hope, the opening door which still admitted no form she yearned to see. And when Madame de Saony, in kind compliance with her request, banished these strange faces, and undertook to unite in herself the offices of nurse, physician, and friend, she made the first step in winning her niece's affections, although ignorant of the helplessness of a fine lady; Anima could not estimate the extent of the self-denial. Nor was the aunt less assiduous, in her efforts to enliven the tedious hours of returning health, by varied entertainments. But after the time had passed when the helplessness of the invalid required actual exertion, the task of attending upon her began to lose its pleasures.

Uninfluenced by deep religious feeling, Madame de Saony had deprecated the bigotry with which her father had clung to the Romish church, without seeking to instruct herself in a purer faith; while the hypocrisy of the wily priests, who surrounded her remaining sister, rendered her vocation contemptible in her eyes. For a time

she had tried to dissuade her from its pursuit ; but her arguments were unavailing, because they sprung from the conviction of the judgment, not of the heart, and Giovanna di Casteluzzo, in spite of her remonstrances, became the head of a flourishing convent remarkable for the rigid observance of monastic rules.

Meanwhile the Baronne de Saony, having married a man of influence and high distinction, followed him to Paris, then the most brilliant court of Europe, and there the difference of their pursuits soon effaced the link of nature's planting in the sister's breasts. In the few visits she paid to the convent of La Vierge, which was not very distant from the capital, the duplicity and sophistry she detected, increased her disgust at Giovanna's profession, and her regrets that her father should have chosen it as the destination of her favourite sister's offspring.

Only in one instance had she overcome her contempt for the willing votaries of a life, which seemed to her in utter variance with the real purpose of their creation ; and then, pity for the ob-

ject, and respect for the sincerity of her repentance, had forced her approbation.

Partaking of the gaiety of Louis the 14th's court, and herself one of the prominent actors in its scenes, Madame de Saony had known, intimately, the melancholy La Vallière. She had wondered at, and mourned over the infatuation, which first led her to sacrifice principle and self-respect to the monarch, who, soon transferred his affections to a brilliant and ostentatious rival, and afterwards led her to endure the torture of seeing those attentions, which had been hers, lavished on another, rather than exclude him from her sight. Reflection, however, taught her the justness of her punishment, and humility, at length triumphing over the violence of passion, bade her seek refuge in those walls, where the history of a world, whose gaiety had become bitterness to her, would not penetrate, and where the tears of penitence might flow undisturbed, and wash, though they could not efface, the dark stain on her soul.

The youth, the beauty, and still more the deep

dejection of this sad votary of the cloister, awoke, in an unparalleled degree, the attention of a court devoted to profligacy; and for a moment they seemed to arrest its career of licentiousness, astonished into admitting the greatness of a sin that could demand such an atonement. The involuntary exclamation of regret which rang through the wondering multitude, who thronged the convent of *Les Sœurs de la Miséricorde*, as the woman who had possessed the vanities of this life to its utmost extent, willingly exchanged them for the dark garb and gloomy existence of a penitent sinner, resounded to the chambers of the palace. A pang of remorse seized on the monarch's heart, even in the presence of the beautiful *Athenais de Montespan*, and hastened her fall from the elevation where she astonished Paris and its fastidious courtiers with the magnificence she displayed.

Never was a woman better calculated than *Montespan* for the equivocal situation to which her "bad ambition" had lifted her. Her beauty, assisted by the sparkling brilliancy of her wit, enabled her to

shine alike in public and in private society; and the festal crowds who thronged the apartments of Versailles were no less fascinated by her dazzling powers, than the monarch himself was (during the hours he trifled away in her boudoir) by her varied talents.

Haughty, yet attractive, and of a generous temper; even those who blamed her life, or smarted beneath the sallies of her wit, were drawn as by a magic wand within her circle; and no one could then have anticipated the change that was to succeed the light and festive tone of society of which she was the arbitress.

A participator in its amusements, Madame de Saony had noted the various actors of the scene with silent attention; she had grieved over the sins, and pitied the sorrows of La Vallière; had witnessed with many, the ambitious career of Montespan, and her sudden fall. But, unlike them, she marvelled not at the successor who replaced them, for she understood the versatile character of the king, and well knew that he needed a refuge from the passions and the con-

flicting sentiments that divided his heart; and in the calm decision of Madame de Maintenon, her bigoted devotion and political powers, she beheld the master mind he had not found in the weak and inanimate disposition of his Spanish consort, who had ended her mournful and monotonous existence unregretted and unmissed—her last moments being soothed and tended by one, who possessed the empire she ought to have held, over the monarch's heart.

It was at the moment of the new favourite's sudden elevation, and when all eyes were directed to the novelty of a monarch's advances being rejected by a woman of inferior station, that the Baron de Saony died, and his widow retired to her château in Languedoc, to consecrate to his memory the hours of solitude and regret.

After a time, however, the wish arose to resume a life more congenial to her taste; and just at the moment when the opportunity occurred of fulfilling her father's wishes with regard to

Anima, she was thinking of returning to the capital.

The arrival of her niece and her subsequent illness delayed these intentions; but in the duties demanded by her new charge, and the attachment she felt towards her, the desire of her heart, for the constant companionship of a child, had been at last gratified. As her affections warmed towards this new object with a tender compassion, she revolted against the cruel wish of her father to immure the youth and beauty of his grandchild in a convent; and hoping to overcome the scruples of a young mind, against which the force of every habit in the new leaf of her existence would militate, determined to carry her to Paris, where she believed a brilliant marriage with a Roman Catholic would be as likely to atone for her mother's error, as the endless *Ave Marias* and *Paternosters*, which she must otherwise spend her life in repeating, under the tutelage of the lady abbess of La Vierge Sainte.

Madame de Saony had long wished she could have introduced a daughter to the vanities of a world she so dearly loved; and though she knew the brilliancy of the court of Louis had passed away with the reign of Montespan, and that its wild frivolities were exchanged for more sober amusements, its gorgeous tilts and tournaments for pompous processions and religious ceremonies, under the bigoted but talented woman, who was supposed now to fill the place of the deceased queen, enough yet remained to satisfy the utmost cravings for amusement.

Gaiety, though sobered, still existed, but deprived of its licentious character; and but for the dark hue which political affairs had assumed, and which made even the most thoughtless pause, a city possessing such rare ornaments as a Sévigné's grace and talents, and a Racine to pour forth "the full tide of song" in celebration of the noblest and most stirring subjects, could not be wanting in attraction. It was with impatience, therefore, that Madame de Saony awaited her niece's convalescence, to introduce her to the court where

she was sure of a cordial welcome, both from the king, who had greatly esteemed her late husband, and from her who now shared his throne, and to whom as Scarron's indigent widow she had had the power of offering some trifling services—a power which never was neglected on the one side, nor forgotten on the other.

Proud of the beauty of her charge, but disturbed by the necessity of introducing her to the Abbess, from whose convent she was determined to rescue her, many an embryo scheme passed through Madame de Saony's mind and sunk again, crushed by dread of her sister's power.

Aware, however, of the influence she had already gained over Anima's feelings, and justly estimating the effects of a gay and splendid court on a young and not powerful mind, she resolved to delay her visit to Les Sœurs de la Vierge Sainte, till vanity or love should have raised an insurmountable obstacle to voluntarily taking the vows of a cloister.

She hoped to triumph soon over her niece's protestant persuasion; but too wise to attempt it

by opposition, she never even broached the subject; or if by chance it was alluded to, the cold expression of contempt, checked all confidence from Anima: and watching her character with attentive interest, Madame de Saony did not detect any passion there, strong enough to overcome the temptations of vanity, pomp, and adulation.

All, therefore, united to facilitate her scheme; and in the long dreary evenings of autumn, when Anima's imagination had been excited by tales of vanity or passion, her aunt, by splendid descriptions of all she had witnessed in the courts of kings, dressed in the pomp and circumstance of life, awakened her curiosity to behold the scene in which they had been acted; and she too, now longed to go to Paris.

CHAPTER IV.

“ANIMA,” said Madame de Saony, as she settled herself in a luxurious fauteuil, in an apartment crowded with those many articles of useless furniture and grotesque porcelains which generally adorned a lady’s Parisian boudoir in the seventeenth century, “Anima, how do you like Paris? Is not my hotel, with its graceful draperies and resplendent mirrors, far more cheerful than those gloomy halls in Languedoc, with my ancestors frowning from the walls, and the wind howling through the long passages, and behind the heavy hangings of arras, as if to reproach me for disturbing their solitude? Here, at least we

shall fear no ghosts, not even those of departed days?"

Anima sighed ; and the sigh was echoed from the deep embrasure of the window where she stood gazing on the scene below, and which, as the evening drew on, and every figure retreated from the streets, was dreary enough.

"Anima," resumed Madame de Saony, playfully, " I will not have you sigh ; no one sighs in Paris, and least of all should you, with youth and beauty ever present, and novelty and amusement to guide the future. The rich heiress of Castelluzzo, to say nothing of De Saony, will command attention here. Cheer up, for you have cause ; but forty-eight hours in Paris, and already an obliging note from the arbitress of its fashions, and a permission to kiss its monarch's hand, is flattering enough to elate your spirits. But tell me, how do you like Paris?"

"But little;" was the answer, "these never-ending walls exclude the fresh air, and shut out the joyous sun. I think of my mountain home, where the spirit and the form alike are free ; and

my heart sinks. But say, dearest aunt," she continued with a tone of deep earnestness, "have you heard, know you aught of Angrogna?"

Startled at her own boldness in thus broaching the forbidden theme, and overcome at the recollections her words had conjured up of other days, and of the changes which twelve short months had wrought, Anima turned to her aunt, and leaning her head against her shoulder, burst into tears.

"What can this mean, dearest Anima?" exclaimed the Baronne; "you may regret the friends you have left, but remember you have exchanged them for nearer and dearer ties. The pastor of Angrogna may have been kind, but his affection could not equal that of a relation. Besides, your country as you call it, is but the funeral pyre of what it once was; and even had your father lived, he never would have immured you amidst its barbarous customs and gloomy rocks. With me you have a mother's fondness in private, and in public the appreciation of merits, which even had they burst into light, in your se-

clusion could never have been duly estimated. Believe me, dear Anima, no desert is like that of a life spent with uncongenial minds; and could you now see your native valleys, tears, not smiles, would shine on this pretty face."

But Anima could not thus be evaded, and with unabated emotion, she continued, "Tell me, oh tell me! are there no news from Piedmont? Were their fears unfounded?"—She could not mention the names of those she felt were despised.

"Dearest! I hear but little of these things; had aught that was important occurred in the valleys of these foolish Vaudois, we must have heard; but by this time they may have probably submitted to reason, and to the Duke of Savoy."

"Submitted! no, they will never submit!" exclaimed Anima.

"So much the worse for them," coolly replied the aunt; "but the days have passed away when men absurdly drowned their families in blood, in defence of their faith, as they called it, and these sectarians will be wise in proportion as the arms of France are powerful."

This reasoning was too cold for Anima, and with the energy of former days she answered, "It may be romance; but that is noble romance which renders danger preferable to dishonour, and the claims of religion superior to those of despotism."

"Religion!" rejoined Madame de Saony; "yes, if you call obstinacy and rebellion religion; but politics and polemics, my Anima, are alike ungraceful topics for female discourse, and so let us dismiss the uninteresting subject. I have a thousand important things to discuss; and first of all, your dress for to-morrow's court, so come and let us begin."

Seated beside each other, the aunt and niece, soon busied in the arcana of brocades and satins, coiffures à la Mancini and corsages à la Grignau, forgot their cares; the one delighted to find she could thus easily dispel her foes, the other amused into forgetfulness of the past.

From this deeply interesting pursuit they were disturbed by footsteps in the antechamber, and the voice of the Seneschal announcing a visiter, scared Anima from the apartment.

The individual who entered was short in stature and perfectly proportioned; his countenance was stern and haughty, and indicated a talented and thoughtful mind. It was Michel le Tellier, comte de Louvois, the successor of Colbert and Seignelai, under whose administration France had reached such an unparalleled height of prosperity. He had arrived at the helm of government at the moment it most required an able pilot, when the difficulty of steering the vessel was increased by the female interference, which all saw that it was destined to receive at the hands of Madame de Maintenon.

As soon as the first feelings with which Madame Saony met the friend of her husband and of brighter days had subsided, she anxiously inquired into the actual state of Paris.

“What,” she began, “is the chief object of interest, and who is to be the next cynosure of admiring eyes, now that Montespan has betaken herself to devotion, and her daughter to matrimony and a private life? Paris serious, seems

a paradox unlikely to continue; but I hear Madame de Maintenon will have it so, and as that must shorten her reign, who is the rising sun that Louis adores? for between us, Le Tellier, his devotion will require warmer rays to kindle its fire than her lectures or Bossuet's orations."

"That sun," replied Louvois, "has sunk with Montespan never to rise again; but the fire which her wit and Vallière's beauty could not maintain, burns steadily, fanned by bigotry and superstition."

"Has then Scarron's widow transferred her guidance from Louis's children to Louis himself?"

"Guide!" retorted the minister; "she rules, she reigns over him, with the tyranny of a master mind."

"But it was always so with Louis's mistresses in their first favour."

"Mistress!" exclaimed Louvois; "but this is his wife!"

"Impossible!" cried Madame de Saony; "she, the indigent widow of the despised Scarron, the governess of Montespan's illegiti-

mate offspring; she, to share the throne of France, to be its monarch's bride? Louvois, you invent these tales to astonish and deceive my provincial ears."

"Would it were so, most excellent Baronne, but if you remain here, you will soon believe in the rumour which is the city's hourly tale."

"But had the king no friend to withhold him from such madness? where was Bossuet? where the Bavarian dauphiness whose influence once was great, and whose proud character must have detected the impropriety of such an alliance? and yourself Louvois, could not you interfere?"

"Madam, there was no lack of remonstrance, but the will of Louis is not so easily controlled, and all that he would concede, was that the marriage should be private. Yet is it well known that it was solemnized ten days ago, under the auspices of our Archbishop Harlai, and witnessed by valets and hirelings."

"But how could Maintenon induce so proud a king to forget what is due to his own dignity and that of France."

“Madam, she persuaded him that the only availing penance for his former follies, was a union in his mature age with an immaculate widow of fifty.”

“And how is the court?”

“Dull enough; the Bavarian princess weeps for the loss of her pin-money, and the change of her religion. Mademoiselle de Montpensier sighs for the faithless Lauzun, and the proud arbitress of all, prays in her antechamber, or preaches at St. Cyr.”

“And politics?” asked Madame de Saony.

“Monopolized by one female ear, it would ill become me to divulge them to another; but the horizon is dark also in that quarter, and only for the miracles that Catinat relates from the mountains of Piedmont, their page would be a blank. But come to Versailles, and see what we are doing. Who is the lovely girl who fled as I entered?”

“An Italian niece whose romantic history you may have heard. I have rescued her from the Vaudois valleys to share the advantages of Parisian society.”

“ Ah ! but Baronne you must keep her origin a secret. The Vaudois are detested here, and indeed it were best they should be exterminated; for troublesome and fanatical as they are, they have presented unheard-of obstacles in those Piedmontese valleys. But I must hasten hence to fulfil many duties this evening, and prepare for the necessity of appearing first in the morning *levée* of our *roturière* queen.”

“ *Levéé !* keeps she such regal ceremony ?”

“ Ay ! her antechamber is thronged with the beggars and indigent priests of the Boulevards, and not content with these, the presence of the great must feed her vanity. Adieu, charming Baronne, and remember that to-morrow I must see this fair savage, who is to astonish Versailles, and change her country and her faith for the charms of our court.”

Dismissing the carriage and attendants which awaited him in the *portière* of Madame de Saony's hotel, Louvois pursued his way with hurried step and frowning brow to his own princely mansion. The damp night-air cooled not his

feverish check, and when at length he reached his own apartments, and could give vent to the bitterness which his conversation with Madame de Saony had roused, he exclaimed—

“Yes! destiny has crowned my ambitious desires, placing me on the pinnacle I have so ardently desired to climb: wealth, rank, adulation are mine, and I might add the worship of the crowd, and the undivided favours of the king, but for a woman! a weak, bigoted woman! and shall Louvois quail before this? No, even she shall ere long cringe at my feet, imploring me to avert her fall from the rash elevation she has attained. Yet, what can shake the firm foundation on which she has erected her power? The love of money, that snare to most, has no influence over her. Pride of station is as foreign to her character as personal vanity is unbecoming her age. Look where I will I see no flaw by which to undermine the fortress that stands in the path of my ambition.”

The minister covered his face, as if to hide

the demoniacal expression which reigned there. At length he resumed his soliloquy in an under tone—

“Yes! there is one way to her destruction. Crime!—which La Brinvilliers bitterly expiated, why didst thou attract the eye of the multitude to thy horrors? Thou that snatchedst the loveliest and kindest princess that ever drew breath, from the court she adorned and the friends who loved her, to consign her to a solitary grave, where is thy power, that thou shouldst not hurl from her pomp, an aged and hypocritical woman, whose influence over the mind of her monarch will destroy the prosperity of France and the elevation of the only man who can protect it?”

He paused, and as he precipitately paced the apartment, large drops stood on the minister's brow, at length the accents burst forth. “Away cursed devil! that could whisper such thoughts in the heart of Louvois; the midnight coward's crime is not for him; and thou must live, hated being, sooner than so dark a deed should stain my fame. Louis! did not I beseech thee, kneel

to thee, bid thee listen to the voice of reason, ere thou calledst her to thy bed and thy councils;—did not I try to impeach her character and her talents? and yet thou wouldst take her to thy bosom, wouldst pour into her ear the weak repentance for thy licentious follies, and receive absolution from her lips, in the drawling accents of her hypocritical faith, and make her the arbitress of thy politics, the judge of thy actions, and of thy ministers.”

His tone changed as he added, “ Louis! thou who couldst consign to the horrors of a withering and perpetual confinement, the friend thou didst confide in, for lifting the eyes of admiration on thy mistress, how wilt thou repay the man who has dared to question the merits of thy wife? Wretched woman! thou or I must fall; and I must devise the means by which thou shalt be the victim.” So saying, Louvois ceased from his perambulation, and the thoughts too deep for utterance were manifested but by the restless play of his features. Then starting from his fauteuil, he exclaimed—

“ Françoise Scarron and would-be Queen of France ! I have thee in my grasp, and not all thy struggles shall free thee. Thy vices could not hurt thee, but thy virtues shall ; and the heart that once beat with Calvinistic devotion shall throb with compassion for a sect damned in the eyes of Louis. Miserable Protestants ! ye shall suffer to satisfy my revenge ; yet I must cautiously dissimulate, and unseen direct the vast power of the intricate machinery, whose lesser wheels shall bear the odium.”

The advancing hour now reminded the minister of duties that must be attended to, and withdrawing his mind by a strong effort from the subject which had engrossed it, he applied himself to the dry study of financial statements to be submitted on the morrow to the king’s consideration.

At length he sought repose, but the indistinct murmurs which repeatedly broke from his lips, evinced the feverish dreams under which he laboured. It was with the haggard look of sleeplessness that Louvois prepared on the morrow to attend the as-

sembly which thronged the antechamber, through which Louis and Madame de Maintenon passed, to listen to the debates in council, at which he insisted on her presence. Far different was the scene now from that its walls had witnessed but a few months before. The ostentatious display of a vain magnificence was gone, and with it the punctilious etiquette demanded by the insignificant queen of Louis. The brilliant exhibition of wit and beauty, where talent, alas! joined with licentiousness to enthral the fancy and mislead the judgment, had alike given place to the dullness of the morning rendezvous, where the sole object of the silent circle was to pay the tribute of respect to the monarch, and satisfy their curiosity respecting his companion. No less different was the appearance of the anteroom. There, where poets and courtiers had vied in adulation, and pages and men-at-arms had glittered in festive or military attire, a body of priests, whose dark dresses contrasted with the rich hangings, or a few shabby and sad-looking figures with poverty discernible in their faces, and with peti-

tions in their hands, now filled the apartment; with the exception only of some minister whose duty required attendance, or some needy applicant for place, whose desire for emolument overcame his disgust at the motley assembly around.

It was amongst these, that Louvois with a proud and impatient air urged his way, gazing with undisguised contempt on the crowd, and stationed himself at the furthest end of the room, beside the door, whose opening was awaited with so many anxious looks.

Leaning with his back against the wall, and his arms folded upon his breast, the haughty minister deigned not to acknowledge the presence of any there, till his attention was arrested by the arrival of one whose dress denoted his high station in the church. Rustling in the dignity of archiepiscopal robes, short and corpulent in person, the new comer took his place beside Louvois, who thus addressed him :

“ May I ask, most reverend prelate, what brings you to this varied assembly, whom it pleases our

new mistress to gaze on, as mementoes, I suppose, of former days?"

"It is the business of the church, Count, and the reports of certain unfitting innovations at St. Cyr, which require early and immediate attention."

"Ah!" said Louvois, "does she encourage apostacy from the church in a royal establishment?"

"Nay, not encourage, but she overlooks the folly of suffering a vain and almost insane woman to pervert the minds of her pupils by her pretended prophecies and absurd ravings. Have you not heard of the wild opinions of the celebrated Madame Guyon, who has imposed on La Maintenon's strong mind, and captivated the vacillating Fénélon by her beauty and eloquence?"

"No," said Louvois; "what you tell me is new, the disputes of the Jansenists and the rebellion of the Calvinists have been enough without entering into the absurdities of new fanatics."

"The former," rejoined Harlai, "are too insignificant, but the latter are becoming seditious,

and require to be subdued by vigorous measures, as their opinions are daily gaining converts in Germany and Poland."

"And quelled they shall be!—the hated sect whose rebellion is intolerable at court, and whose austere morality is obnoxious in the eyes of Rome!" added Louvois with a sneer.

"Yes!" replied Harlai, "but they are powerful and demand care. I am told that their resistance in Piedmont has been surprising, and force has been unavailing to drive them from their fastnesses."

"What says Père la Chaise to their doctrines?" asked Louvois.

"He blames them; but being inclined himself to favour dissent, and having defended the Janse-nists he is wisely silent."

"Ah! he too dissentient; why, he is the bosom friend and adviser of both monarch and mistress."

"Call her not by that offensive name, Louvois; respect the sanctity of my vocation, which forbids these earthly frailties. Truly we may thank the confessor who induced our king to lay

aside follies which were an offence to the holy church of which"—

"Thou art so immaculate a support, most reverend archbishop," interrupted Louvois, sarcastically.

"Nay, my son, I have not been exempt from the weakness of human nature, but—"

"Thou art desirous that others should be so; and thinkest an old and jealous wife will be our monarch's safeguard. But beware, beware Harlai, the ambitious and self-righteous wife of Louis may be more dangerous than the weak and erring mistress who might be guided by her confessor!"

At these words the folding-doors of the ante-chamber were thrown open, and all eyes were turned towards the female form which entered, leaning on the monarch's arm. Her figure was set off to the utmost advantage by a tight dress of leaf-coloured satin, the train of which swept the floor in graceful folds, and added to the height which already exceeded the usual standard; the only ornament was a resplendent brooch, which confined the dress where the swan-like neck arose in

elegant proportion. Her hair, braided on the high forehead, which bore the impress of noble thoughts, and fastened in a dark, luxuriant knot at the back of the head, contrasted with the extreme pallour of the countenance, which, but for the regularity of feature and beauty of expression, would have made one regret the loss of its pristine freshness.

With a composed demeanour and almost regal arriage, Madame de Maintenon entered the apartment, her quick eye at a glance discerning its various occupants. Courtesying to the Archbishop of Paris, but dignified even in her submission, she received his compliments, and promised an early audience.

Then acknowledging the presence of his companion by a severe look, which seemed to pierce his inmost thoughts, she advanced into the crowd that awaited her at the lower end of the room; and there her commanding expression, yielding to the softer one of compassion, she received the multitude of petitions forced into her hands, and with kind looks of encouragement consigned them to an attendant page. She then passed on, the

blessings of the poor and the prayers of the humble, soothing the bitter feelings excited by the view of the proud and curious courtiers, whose scorn she well knew was pointed at her; and as the door of the state apartment closed on her retreating figure, no disapproving murmur disturbed the clamorous applause which burst from the lips of the sorrowful and forlorn, who felt they had found in her a link between their hard lot and the unparalleled luxuries of the great.

The crowd dispersed, the poorer class returning pleased and soothed to their gloomy dwellings, and the proud minions of prosperity following their monarch to the ceremonious meeting of the next apartment.

Concealing the asperity of his thoughts beneath a bland but still sarcastic smile, Louvois joined the courtiers, who thronged on Louis's steps, and bit his lips with vexation at the sounds of approbation which smote his ear.

CHAPTER V.

THE scene which the presence-chamber presented, was singular enough. A court without a queen; a queen without a court. Yet there she sat: in manners and appearance more majestic than any of the royal dames who ever yet received homage in that gorgeous apartment; making dignity more dignified by the simplicity of her manners, and honouring rather than receiving honour from the station she occupied. The monarch, as affable in private life as he was magnificent in his public career, and with a manner improved into seriousness by the late change in his habits, stood near her; and beside him, his favourite

sister-in-law, Christina, the Bavarian dauphiness, whose amiability and talents had overcome the antipathy Louis generally testified for awkwardness of demeanour and corpulency of person, which in her verged upon grossness.

On the present occasion, alarmed at the ascendancy which Madame de Maintenon was hourly gaining, and jealous of the contrast afforded by her quiet deportment, the dauphiness was feverishly anxious to regain the favour which she fancied she had lost; and mindful of the success which had attended Montespan's brilliant sallies and pointed sarcasms, she forgot, in the imitation, the ever ready bait which accompanied them; and bent on amusing the monarch, she aimed at random the shafts of her ridicule, rendered more bitter by her aversion, at the various parties who now began to arrive.

"Behold, sire," she said, "the Duchess of Richelieu, like a Dauphiné Alp that has donned an additional shade of blue, come to visit your Majesty, but has forgotten to thaw beneath the rays of your glory."

The monarch smiled; and delighted at the smile, the princess continued.

“See, here is Racine, come from his musty papers to make Assyrian kings and queens of us all, and we shall figure as Vashti and Ahasuerus in the next representation,” said she, casting a glance at the proud features of Madame de Maintenon, who stood conversing with the poet.

“There, at least, he will be appreciated; La Marquise understands his *corps de théâtre*.”

The king felt the allusion to the memory of Scarron, and a flush passed over his countenance, but it was unobserved by the lady, and she ran on.

“Ah, here is the Duchesse de Chevreuse; perhaps your Majesty has not heard that during her residence within the walls of St. Cyr, she has imbibed all of quietism but the manner. But preserve me from the brandishing sword and powdered peruke of her companion, Colonel d’Aubigné, whose head has been so turned by his sister’s elevation, that he has forgotten the very position nature placed it in during Scarron’s lifetime.”

This pointed and ill-timed witticism was beyond Louis' endurance, and in a severe tone he hinted at the respect^u that was due to the brother of his friend; then, too well bred to observe the confusion his rebuke excited, the monarch turned to receive the numerous presentations of that morning's levée.

First among them stood Madame de Saony and her niece, who, bewildered by the scene around, clung embarrassed to the arm of her aunt. The eyes of Louis rested with pleasure on her graceful form, as he welcomed Madame de Saony on her return; and when Anima bent low to kiss the royal hand, he inquired as he raised her, when she arrived at Paris, and from whence.

The Baronne answering for her niece, said that Mademoiselle de Solara had only lately left Piedmont, but had hastened to avail herself of the permission to attend his court.

“Piedmont!” replied the prince, “’Tis a rude soil to produce so fair a flower, but it is an expiatory offering surely to our court, and I trust to our holy church?”

Anima turned of a marble paleness as her aunt assented, and even declared her voluntary departure from her native land, a proof of her conviction of its follies. Her change of colour was not unnoticed by Louis, who, determined to crush every symptom of dissent in his court, or least shadow of sectarianism, which he hated, renewed, and with more severity, his questions to herself. Terrified and confused, Anima answered with a blush, and a scarcely audible assent. And as they passed on, conscience reminded her that in that blush and that whisper, she had sacrificed her faith to her Maker, to the fear of her king!

Delighted to find that she had correctly estimated her niece's character, and convinced that the denial of her religion was her only path to regal favour, Madame de Saony advanced, and the scene became every moment more brilliant, and to Anima more bewildering. Bands of music poured forth their exhilarating strains, rich dresses and glittering jewels added to the gay picture, and Madame de Saony, surrounded by friends of former days, would soon have for-

gotten in lively conversation, her young charge, but for the frequent encomiums on her beauty. To Anima all seemed a wearying disappointment, one thought alone filled her heart and blinded her observation—the remembrance of that short conference with the king, in which she felt she had tacitly abjured her country and her faith!—and greatly was she relieved, when having passed through the different rooms and greeted nearly all their visitants, her aunt took her departure; and she was released, to seek, in her own apartment, the rest and refuge she so much needed.

But hers was not the only mind in that throng, writhing under the constraint of wearing an outward expression, little in unison with the burning feelings within, that longed for release; and few could have guessed there was an affinity, on such a subject, between her and the haughty minister, who, with every angry passion boiling in his breast, was also hurrying from the scene where he had with difficulty preserved an outward calm.

Excusing himself from the Baronne's pressing invitation, Louvois threw himself into his carriage, and desiring his attendants to convey him speedily to his dwelling, he gave full scope to his anxious meditations.

"Yes truly, she is lovely, that Vaudois girl, and were not Louis reformed, might work miracles in our court. But no! that cannot be now; yet she might be one of my tools, her protestant persuasion and her eloquent eyes might do much towards decoying my hated rival into the snare; but it is clear that she is weak. The timid girl whose faith and patriotism can be silenced by a frown from Louis, is no coadjutor for Louvois! There is no way but to persuade the protestants of the Boulevards to pour their petitions into Maintenon's compassionate ears, which she will easily lend; and then Louis shall hear it, and hurl her with indignation from her elevation. Harlai let out things this morning not to be overlooked; and little did she think as she so proudly traversed the antechamber, that a mine was already laid beneath her feet!"

The carriage stopped, and Louvois entering his apartment, gave orders that he should not be disturbed. Then carefully locking the door, he took from a spacious wardrobe a dark and ample cloak, which, thrown over his other garments, completely disguised his figure; and placing on his head a friar's hood which lay in another corner, he gazed on the mirror opposite; but the expression it reflected, was so opposed to the sacred character of the dress, that he flung it aside, saying "nay, thou wilt not do for me; begone, base counterfeit of virtues, thou rarely coverest; and come, thou more open badge of outward profession," at the same time substituting for the hood, a Spanish hat and plume; and pulling it over his stern features, he took from an *escrutoire* a bunch of keys, and applying one to an invisible door in the pannel of the wall, let himself out by a private staircase.

The dusk of evening was darkening every object, and, save where some white walled mansion stood out in the dulness of the winter twilight, a confused prospect was before him.

Louvois threaded his way through the most deserted quarters, and unheeding each indistinct sight and sound that met his observation, he traversed every narrow court or alley, till he reached a square in the very centre of the Boulevards, of low and ill-built houses.

“Yes,” said he to himself, “this surely must be the place, where Harlai assured me that Protestantism and Jansenism fester, and send out their pestilential vapours to infect the piety of Paris.”

“Reverend Archbishop!” he sarcastically added, “surely thy pious footsteps have likewise trodden these narrow courts, to win converts to thy doctrines, and force souls into apostacy. ’Tis whispered, other shrines than those of devotion may here be worshipped; and Harlai is surely too devout to neglect any act of adoration. I’ll enter here—’tis dark and I am alone, but not unarmed;” and he grasped his dagger as he softly raised the latch of the low door of a wretched looking habitation; but hearing voices within, he paused to listen to their conversation.

By the checkered and uncertain glimmer of a

small lamp, he could just discern the tall and well-shaped form of a young woman, whose age might be under twenty-five years, and whose beauty, the chief character of which consisted in the loftiness of its expression, was striking, even in the very humble garments which were modestly arranged over her figure.

Beside her was a man, disguised like himself in a large cloak, but whose profession was revealed by the monkish cowl and shaven head. In a subdued tone, he appeared to be urging some important request, to which the woman with the voice of indignation answered—

“ Stop! bad emissary of a worse villain, back to thy master; tell him I had rather see my poor father wing his way to another world worn out by misery and famine; rather myself be shut up in an inquisitorial dungeon, than redeem either at the expense of my virtue and my religion. Tarry not, but begone!”

“ Tush, foolish woman,” replied the figure in disguise, “ deemest thou not the sacrifice of thy poor body, will be acceptable in the sight of the Holy Virgin, to her ministers, and—”

“Monster!” interrupted she, “I acknowledge not the tenets of your Satanic creed, the doctrines of Antichrist.”

“Weak woman,” continued the priest, “hear reason; knowest thou not my master possesses the royal ear; and dost thou not understand that a word from him may change the destiny of thy people?”

“Then,” answered she, “in the name of Him, whose minister he professes to be, why does he not stop the torrent of blood, that cries from the plains of Languedoc, and the mountains of Cevennes, for vengeance on him and his accomplices?”

“Fair maiden,” said the priest, “that bloodshed shall be stopped if thou wilt; and bethink thee, if indeed the protestant blood can claim a heavenly vengeance, how wilt thou fare, who mightest have saved a nation? Give but a favourable hearing to my mission, and Harlaide Chanvallon pledges himself to redeem thy people, and protect thy father.”

“Wretch!” she exclaimed; “know that a protestant would not purchase preservation at such a

price. What is my life here, what even my father's in comparison with the life hereafter! Sooner than be at peace with so polluted a church as thine, my people would willingly embrace torture and starvation—Oh welcome death! to relieve us from such a world—”

She sunk on a stool beside her, and hid her look of despair in her clasped hands.

The priest drew nigh, and grasping with a firm clutch her delicate wrist, muttered—

“Be wise and submit, riches, honour, pardon for thyself, thy father, and thy people are thine. Resist! and those are at hand who will assist me in forcing thee to obey my master's authority. I give thee yet three minutes to decide; and then come with me thou must, and, willingly or not, 'tis one.”

She struggled not, nor screamed, but with a low and determined voice answered—

“Said I not, death were better than dishonour? And could not the willing spirit in a moment free itself from this suffering clay? I despise thee, ruffian, but I fear thee not, for as surely as divine

vengeance awaits thy master for this unwarrantable exertion of power, so will He in answer to my prayer, deliver me from thy violence.”—

“ Yes, surely has he sent thee deliverance, heroic woman!” cried a voice behind the door, and disembarassed of his cloak, armed with his glittering dagger, Louvois stood between the priest and his prey.

“ Go, villain!” said the minister, “ tell thy master the poor and defenceless have a friend he wots not of, to protect them, and defend their cause even to the foot of Louis’s throne. Begone, nor attempt to molest me in my path. Those are not wanting, who, should ought befall me, would hunt out the cause, ay, at the end of years, and crush thee like the worm beneath their foot. Speak not of what thou hast seen, and as thou art wise in keeping mine and thy master’s secret, so will I preserve thine. Trouble me not with words, sir, and if thy master question thee, tell him a bloodhound is on his track whose scent hath never failed.”

Shrinking before the haughty bearing of the

minister, and conscious of his high station, though ignorant of his person, the priest beheld at once the uselessness of reply, and left the apartment.

“Who and what art thou,” cried the girl, “that alone in this city, where crime cries aloud to Heaven, and whose rulers are steeped in vice, preservest thy integrity, and dost respect the adherents to the true faith?”

By this time Louvois had recovered his usual stern reserve, and with a chilling tone he replied,

“Woman, my name is unimportant; chance led me to thy abode, and indignation at yon coward’s villainy detained me, scarce expecting to find beneath this roof the meeting-place of the sect to which I perceive thou dost belong; I now ask thee to direct me thither.”

“Stranger, ere I involve their security by disclosing their abode, I must know thy purpose and thy name?”

“My name, woman? It is in vain to ask me: suffice it to say, curiosity respecting thy sect, perhaps a desire to benefit it, led me here.”

“Thou wert sent to my rescue in the hour of

danger, and nobly didst thou fulfil thy mission, therefore, I will trust thee; but remember, he who can protect the innocent will also punish the guilty. Promise," she added, "by thy honour, that my disclosure shall not draw down on us the cruel emissaries of thy profligate king, or of his hard-hearted minister."

"Safely, solemnly I promise," said Louvois.

"Then," rejoined the maiden, "here, in this wretched hovel, are met the scanty remnant of a true people—the few who remained, when the unjust mandate of the ungodly Louvois drove the sad inhabitants of Languedoc and Cevennes to seek forgetfulness of their miseries in another land. Here, they unite in close concealment, to glean a scanty and insufficient subsistence; here, but for the help of one kind heart must they have sunk beneath their miseries."

"Who mean you?" inquired Louvois,—*"Madame Hervaud, the rich financier's wife?"*

"Yes, truly, she was our benefactress; and doubtless the heart which delighted in the works

of piety and love has found its reward in Paradise; and I, what am I, that I should linger out my wretched existence here. But I murmur not; the lesson is bitter, bitter indeed at times, but salutary. Scattered are we, sir, on the face of the earth; its produce is denied to us, and still our labour, even our virtue, is made a subject of barter and luxury. No voice is lifted in defence of the Protestants; but yet we have hope, for our cause is carried to a higher tribunal—before the King of kings. Supported by the sale of our silk works, my father and I obtained a scanty but sufficient support, and though poor, were happy till the unjust Louvois persuaded the king to imbrue his hands in blood, and tarnish his character by the revocation of that edict by which his grandfather had secured our rights. Then came the sad tide of desolation—the voice of pity was not heard amid the loud festivities of Louis's palace; and the groans of the massacred Protestants, the shrieks of their injured women, penetrated not there; but they rose to higher courts, and their echo will yet be heard when the persecutor and the persecuted

will alike meet to receive the guerdon of their deeds !

“ Then it was, that deprived of our trade and our privileges, some of our sect collected in these dark abodes, thinking their squalidness would conceal their wretched existence, but the eyes of the charitable penetrated our refuge and relieved our misery. She however is gone hence, and none but the emissaries of vice have since visited this last resort. You, sir, have witnessed what a Protestant maiden has been exposed to, and you may judge, if we should not shrink with horror from a church which tolerates such sins.”

She stopped, overcome by the recollection of what she had gone through, and the breath which struggled with rising sobs, choked and nearly convulsed her.

“ Wretched woman !” exclaimed Louvois; “ be calm, be calm; why not abjure a religion which exposes you to such suffering?”

“ Because death,” gasped the maiden, “ were better !”

“ Art thou alone in this dismal dwelling ?

is there none to protect thee? thou art too young, too fair for such solitude as this."

"My father yet lives,—thanks to Providence! for he alone knows how long that protection will be spared. Stranger, the air thou breathest is nigh pestilential; a fever, the sad effects of misery and starvation, exerts its power in these crowded alleys, and more merciful than thy monarch, silently and gently summons us from this scene of injustice."

Louvois shuddered as he gazed on the deathlike gloom of that small chamber, then said, "And dost thou not fear such a solitude, unbroken but by the presence of a bedridden old man?"

"Till to-night, I feared nought; and now that I have been succoured in my need, my fear will turn to confidence in Him to whom I prayed."

"But should the emissaries of that bad man return, what wilt thou do? Beauty is a more dangerous possession than gold, and he who seeks after it, more hardened and determined than the mercenary robber."

"There is a way, stranger, by which the vir-

tuous are ever secure. 'Tis said, a lion will flee from a maid in her purity, and thus will I triumph even over the Archbishop of Paris."

"Say rather arch fiend," rejoined Louvois; "but here you cannot remain, you must flee this abode, and seek one unknown to your pursuer."

"It is impossible; it were death to my suffering father."

"Behold, here is gold, this will procure the necessary means to remove him. Nay, no thanks, 'tis little compared to what is in my power, if thou wilt follow my counsel. There is one who rules the destiny of France: none else has power at the court of France but she; and she alone can serve thee; this false old priest may boast of his power to thee, and hold out the guerdon of thy surrender; but 'tis a delusion. Knowest thou not that La Maintenon holds unbounded sway over her monarch's mind, and that one word from her mouth can decide the fate of millions? go to her, pour into her ears the tale of thy misery, implore her protection; and her

heart, which never refused compassion, will guard thee from the violence of thy persecutor, and perhaps change thy people's fate."

"But how shall I reach her; the bloodthirsty Louvois stops the cry of misfortune from reaching the ear of royalty; and the gates of Versailles are closed to the indigent."

"Woman, thou slanderest him; none can be prevented from reaching the presence of Maintenon, the sick, the poor are her courtiers, and soon, may I add the Protestants."

"Stranger," exclaimed the maiden, "do thou protect me, do thou lead me to her feet; fill the measure of my obligation, and take me to her presence!"

"It is impossible," rejoined Louvois. "As thou dost value thy life and that of thy father and thy people, thou must promise secrecy; only on such terms can thy cause prosper at Versailles. Nay more, thou must promise, by all that thou holdest holy, that if ever chance should again unite our presence, thou wilt forget we ever met before. I ask it of thee, for thine own sake, and in return for

the deed, whereby I saved the honour thou sayest is dearer to thee than life."

"Stranger! by my protestant faith! by my tortured brethren nay more, by my hatred to Louis and his wicked minister, I swear to keep thy secret."

"It is enough; know then that Fénélon, the Abbé de St. Vallery, must first present thee to La Maintenon, and then thou must seek a private audience from her; but beware of his discovering the tenets thou dost profess, nor disclose them to any ears but hers. Thou wilt find the abbé at St. Cyr. Awaken his charity, trust in his real piety, and fail not to be at Versailles this day week."

A low groan from the adjoining room interrupted the discourse.

"Mysterious stranger," said the maiden, "my father calls, I must depart. May He who rewards virtue and punishes crime, bless and preserve thee for thy charity to me this night. I give thee all I can call mine, the prayers of

a faithful trust, and the blessings of a grateful heart."

So saying, the maiden went out of the room, and left the minister uncertain whether most to resent her strictures on himself, or to prize the soft balm of her gentle blessings. With slow and cautious steps Louvois then returned to his splendid hotel; but the scenes he had so lately beheld, pressed with redoubled force on his mind, when he sought repose on his luxurious couch.

Amidst the pressure of constant business and the excitement of an unceasing ambition, he had had no time to yield to softer temptations, and despising the sins which had no attractions for him, he could find no excuse for those who fell into their snare. The outrage which he had so lately witnessed, called up therefore, an indignation in his bosom not easily quelled. He thought of that proud and bloated churchman; that sad, but heroic maiden, whose strength of character he could especially appreciate, and the remembrance of her blessings

on himself, penetrated and softened the hardness of his disposition.

Ah ! who shall estimate the influence of one approving look, one gentle prayer from lips we admire, telling us we are not entirely condemned nor undeserving. Like the incruusted ice beneath the genial rays of the morning sunbeam, our sternness yields, and the heart warms with hope beneath it !

Regrets for the past, and an indistinct anticipation of a better future, awoke in Louvois' breast ; but the thoughts that rapidly succeeded each other, seemed to render the air of the chamber oppressive, and throwing open the casement, he wooed the chilly air of night.

The city lay before him in midnight stillness, uninterrupted by any sound ; around were the splendid hotels of the rich ; no signs of the squalid misery of its more distant quarters, and the cold pale light of the horizon rose over the spot where, sunk in repose, lay the monarch he served, and the foe he detested. But purer,

better feelings than wont, had risen in his breast; and softened into a momentary benevolence, he exclaimed,—

“ Mysterious Being! who didst create this fair universe, why dost thou suffer its beauty to be marred by those with whom thou hast peopled it? Why dost thou not exterminate the sin which must be offensive to thy holiness, and leave the good to enjoy thy bounties undisturbed? Why should thy worship be a cause of bloodshed and destruction between thy creatures, who pour forth their adoration and praise to thee, heedless of torture? And, there again is a dark problem;—their power of endurance;—their willingness to seek misery for thy sake. And that aching void;—that craving at my heart for something this world cannot give; what can it be?—knowledge, philosophy, occupy the attention; riches delude the sense; but each alike fail to fill the heart. Friendship even is vain, and the unsatisfied desire remains!

“ Proud woman, who hast reached the summit

of thy ambition! Say, hast thou never felt this want? Is all happiness with thee? Nay, methinks I have seen on thy brow a shade that spoke of trouble, and then it was not all hate I felt for thee; and wert thou not an obstacle in my path, whose power might hurl me from the eminence I must attain, I could spare thee. But no, the train is laid, and thou thyself must fire it.

The expression on the minister's face changed, and closing the window he said, "Farewell, thou chilly air, thou art too like my own sad thoughts; to-morrow's dawn must see another light than this."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Mademoiselle de Solara returned from the palace of Versailles, her aunt, alike complimented her on her successful début and rallied her on her physical weakness, which alone had prevented her enjoying it. But it was not the sensation of fatigue only which made Anima seek her own apartment, and gladly lay aside her festive robe and glittering ornaments, the gaiety of which contrasted so painfully with her present feelings. And not until she was disencumbered from the shining satin and varied wreaths of her tasteful dress, did she experience the first moment of real satisfaction that day afforded her.

In early youth the first disappointment of the excited imagination is an affliction, and the first error, a crime, which frightens us from our better thoughts; and in the present instance the former, assuming the disguise of the latter, was exercising all its influence over the young and not too powerful mind of Anima.

With vivid distinctness did the scene of the morning present itself to her fevered dreams, as she beheld in her sleep the monarch so kind and gracious to others, to her harsh and severe: again she heard the words he had uttered, her aunt's reply, and her own faltering but still intelligible assent; then the splendid apartments, the joyous music, and the motley crowd, all more gorgeous even than the reality, passed before her. But rapidly, the scene and the countenances which haunted her altered with a thousand varied expressions, till at length they settled in the fond similitude of her once loved pastor; but blood was on his silvery hair, and sorrow and reproach disturbed the wonted serenity of his face; and with

her efforts to seek his forgiveness and throw herself in his arms, the sleeper awoke.

Ah! who that knows the bitterness of waking with the oppressive recollection of an error that has been committed, or an affliction that has befallen us, would not willingly exchange that feeling for the burden of self-accusation or distress, which, on the preceding evening, we had so impatiently desired to lay down.

The past rose on the mind of Anima with fresh clearness, and the gray dawn with its crimson streaks, visible through the parted curtains, reminded her of its gorgeous hues upon her native mountains, but brought with it no consolation; while, more deeply coloured by her midnight dream, she beheld her fault, and felt that she had now, indeed, passed the rubicon; that she had denied and abjured her faith, while the forgotten friends of her youth seemed suddenly bound by a firmer tie than ever, a tie, which reflection whispered, she herself had rent asunder for ever.

Various projects passed through her brain, of fleeing from temptations which she felt were too strong for her, and from friends who might coerce her yet wavering inclinations; but each alike faded, and she found relief from the storm, in a flood of unavailing tears.

But if Anima's couch had been disturbed, no less so had been that of her aunt by far different meditations. Madame de Saony reviewed with delight the gay scene of the preceding day, anticipated success for the future, and congratulated herself on the accuracy of her calculation respecting her niece; but still one difficulty stood in her path, in the force of those early impressions, the strength of which she could ill estimate, and which, unless speedily overcome, must for ever prevent her from rising in Louis's favour. She knew there must be no delay in giving the monarch a proof that his suspicions were unfounded, and that it was no heretic she had ventured to introduce into his court; but how to effect this, unless by persuading Anima to attend mass, which she believed was beyond her power, she

knew not, and various schemes rose in her mind and occupied her even to the late hour of her breakfast.

She then rose and lingered over her toilet, almost dreading the first meeting with her niece. At length a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and going to a richly ornamented bureau which occupied a niche in her boudoir, she drew from its crimson couch a glittering cross, which shone with dazzling brilliance as she raised it to the light, and thus addressed it—

“Yes, beautiful bauble! more precious to me for the memory thou dost bring, than for thine own rich value—sole remembrance of the mother I adored, it is no disrespect to her that prompts me to consign thee to another mistress; and if, in addition to the purpose for which I would now use thee, thy splendour should aid in making converts to the tenets which thou dost typify, I shall not have profaned her gift, nor wilt thou have disgraced thy profession. How often in childhood have I marvelled at thy brightness, and wished thou wert mine, and when at last I be-

came thy possessor, the hour for prizing thee was past, and thy beauty tarnished in my eyes, because thou wert no longer hers. True symbol of her faith—pure, bright, unperishing—how unworthy thy present owner! May the tears, which were in vain to recall her spirit to its deserted home, yet be availing to reunite us in another world!”

She wiped the fast falling drops, and opening a spring, which concealed a small recess within the cross, took from it a tress of hair, the darkness of which, like that of night, was yet sprinkled with some silvery streaks, and then continued—

“Dearer than the rich case which enshrined thee, this tress must remain with me, and another take its place. Yes! I have it still, the long ringlet which in our last evening together, Olivia severed as in play and bade me, with an earnestness I could not then understand, keep it for her sake. It seems a sin to divide its luxuriant length, yet for her child, the being dearer to her even than I could be, I will do it, then bury it in this glittering tomb!”

Again and again she pressed the dear memo-

rial to her lips, then without trusting to another glance clasped it in the case.

Waiting till she had effaced the traces of her regret, and could resume the usual liveliness of her tone, Madame de Saony, after a few moments entered the room, where, reclining listlessly in the deep fauteuil, and holding in her hand a volume from which her thoughts had widely strayed, Anima awaited her appearance. The Baronne saw, but would not comment on the ravages that the sleepless night had wrought, and waited till both were refreshed by their repast, before entering on a subject from which she unconsciously shrunk; then, surmounting her repugnance, she began by complimenting Anima on her success the preceding day, and in a more impressive tone added; “And now, dearest Anima! accept my thanks for your willing compliance with my wishes, and my approbation of your feminine and modest acquiescence at Versailles; and then accept this trinket, symbol, not so much of any particular creed, as of the Saviour’s sufferings we both adore, valued by your sainted mother,

and endeared to you, as an object of her reverence and her love. Nay, I know what you would reply, and understand the meaning of those tears, but wear it, not only for my sake, but for hers, of whom it bears a yet tenderer memorial; and while you weep over the remembrance of what you have lost, be cheered by the belief, that perhaps at this very moment she beholds you with joy, uniting the memory of her with the dawning rays of a religion she venerated till death!"

She drew the chain, which supported the massive ornament, round the slender neck of *Made-moiselle di Solara*, and as she firmly clasped it, felt as if she were riveting round her the fetters of the church of Rome. And *Anima* also thought, as she gazed on the precious lock of hair enshrined within the cross, and pressed it fondly to her heart, that with it she was tightening a snare she would never have courage to break through. To express the contending feelings which struggled within her bosom was beyond her power;

and she hastily left the apartment, wretched, and content to be so.

Days followed, and still the subject of religion remained untouched. Her aunt treated her as an avowed Roman catholic, but carefully avoiding any open allusion to it, gave her no opportunity of refuting the imputation; and it was only in the solitude of her chamber that she could pour forth, in secret prayer, her uncertainties and regrets. But it is not in our nature to bear the pressure of care for long, unaided by some outward relief. The minds of the strong find vent in action, and rise from beneath its weight; but the very young or the very weak, yield like the ductile wax, which easily takes and as easily loses the imprinted form; and Anima, with none to participate in her secret troubles, began to weary of them, and gradually attended with growing interest to the visiters who thronged her aunt's hotel. When the time arrived for their next visit to Versailles, she mechanically prepared to accompany her, and as they again sought that festal chamber, the scene

seemed changed, and when kindly welcomed by Madame de Maintenon, whose fascination especially over the very young, seldom failed of success, her fears vanished beneath the gentle influence, and for a moment her regrets fled with them.

Struck by her beauty, the king observed her; and satisfied of the injustice of his former suspicions by the brilliant symbol that hung beside her, he addressed her with the courtesy which peculiarly characterized him, and left her not until, elevated by the honour, Mademoiselle de Solara confessed, even to herself, that she no longer wished to forsake Versailles.

Meanwhile as the crowd moved on, and with them Madame de Saony, she was left unprotected and alone; perceiving her alarm, Madame de Maintenon drew near, and with an attention and grace few could withstand, conversed with her till she had enlisted her young imagination in her favour; and as that day drew to its close, and the aunt and niece were once more within the privacy of their apartments, it was with far dif-

ferent emotions they reviewed its events than on the former occasion. Nor were Anima's new feelings unreturned, her innocence and beauty had wrought their way into the heart of one who was ever alive to the fresh attractions of youthful purity, and Madame de Maintenon invited, even pressed her to visit her in private, and appointed an early day for her reception.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was with an agitation unsuspected by her who caused it, that Anima prepared for her visit to the boudoir of the Marquise, at an hour which, though it seemed early to her, had long witnessed Madame de Maintenon released from the duties of the toilet. Having ended her long and strict devotional exercises she sat absorbed in the business of the day, devoting to it an attention and perspicuity of comprehension, few but herself could boast of possessing.

Papers of importance were before her; accounts wherein the closest inspection could detect no flaw, the items of which were principally acts of cha-

riety; beside these, were large volumes of notes taken from the parliamentary debates, for the use of him whose convenience was her first care; letters all read and answered. At a little distance from her table stood a book-case containing those classic authors, into whose regions of poetry and delight few female minds had then resolution to penetrate; with the best modern publications, whose style amused her lighter hours, and gave poignancy and elegance to the language Louis loved to hear.

The expression of her eye was that of the deepest thought, as she examined paper after paper, and inscribed her observations on their margins. At length pushing the escrutoire from her, she exclaimed with the sigh of exhaustion,—

“ Yes! the world calls these employments hard, but without them how wearisome would be my existence. Oh, Louis! but for thee, never could I have endured the privations I bear in thy court. For ever undervalued, misunderstood, thy presence alone illumines my misery!

“ Throne of France! whose superb grandeur I

might easily share, how far inferior to the affections where I would reign triumphant unscanned by human observation. The garb of royalty, its pomp and magnificence, how contemptible does it seem to me, and yet to charm His eye, I am content to wear it—ay, and bear with a smile, the degradation of false-hearted flattery, more depressing than even Louvois' undisguised hatred! Difficult station! where would be thy charm, what the reward for thy cares but for the support of prayer. But forward—forward is the watchword; dull fears begone; my path is lighted by the lamp of conscience,—no benighted wanderer am I—and I will obey her directions, follow where she leads; and if I fail—then religion comfort me!”

A knock at the door disturbed her, and bidding the stranger enter, Madame de Maintenon on seeing him exclaimed,—

“ Ah ! is it thou d'Aubigné, my brother ? Welcome indeed art thou ! ”

The brother and sister then sat in close converse together. But who that noted the different expression of both countenances could guess that

any link of sympathy united the two. The sister's brow—so open and pure, seemed as if falsehood's shade had never rested there; the brother's—narrow, lowering and lit up by a bold look of reckless animal courage alone.

His discourse assumed the earnest tone of persuasion; hers, that of a calm but steady dissent.

“Françoise,” said he, “why do you constantly neglect my requests; why refuse my just and reasonable demands?”

“My brother, I have already told you, 'tis in vain to urge my interference; it cannot be—”

“But, sister, the favour I would have you ask is so trifling, and when you know my embarrassed circumstances,—”

“D'Aubigné, did not I obtain for you the rank you hold; has not my private purse supplied your necessities?”

“True; but the former was neither unearned before, nor now a sinecure; and the latter paltry sum—”

“Was all I had to offer!” interrupted she.

“Nay,” said d'Aubigné, “that I can scarcely

credit; generous to every one, Louis cannot be a niggard to thee, and 'tis currently reported no request of thine is ever denied."

"And thinkest thou, brother, I would take advantage of his kindness to importune him on such a subject, or that I would accept of the liberality so justly imputed to him?"

"If not for yourself, Françoise, you might for others; Montespan was more thoughtful of her friends, more mindful of her own dues!"

"This to me, brother! dost thou place me on a level with Montespan?" said she, with a look before which his eye quailed and fell.

"I know not what thou art, but an unkind and ungenerous sister," retorted he confusedly. "Have not I implored thee again and again to obtain for me some place, however trifling, to support my family and my——"

"Vices, you should add," answered Madame de Maintenon, with cold severity. "But brother, I have done; you have received my answer. A sister's affection, a friend's best advice you have ever had from me; both, alas! have been as value-

less as her honour, weighed, in thine estimation, against the paltry endowment of wealth; and if indeed a natural weakness for thy advantage ever dwelt in my bosom, thou only, hast cancelled it for ever. Never shall a request to increase my own grandeur, or that of my relations, importune the ears of Louis. Thy difficulties I compassionate, though I reprobate their cause; and to alleviate them I offer thee all I can command, and that is wrung from my own wants—from the luxury of relieving worthier applicants.”

D'Aubigné took the proffered pocket-book, and cowering beneath the majestic look that accompanied the gift, kissed her hand and departed.

The bitter meditations this painful interview gave rise to, were checked by the arrival of another candidate for a private conference, and the Abbé de St. Vallery presented himself and obtained a most gracious reception. Although she could not confide the cause of her present agitation to him, Madame de Maintenon felt soothed and relieved by the mildness of his manner and the piety of his discourse. Of some

of her trials she felt she could disemburden herself to him, and confess the scruples which made the errors many might have deemed venial, a heavy source of regret to her. "Alas!" observed she, "you little know the conflicting doubts that oppress me, the uncertainties that beset my actions, or the constant self-reproach for my weak compliance with many a wish of the king's, which my conscience condemns as wrong; it is this which is a far heavier pressure than the constant business which occupies me, and too often excludes my Maker from my thoughts. Still one redeeming light is mine, the power of doing good, and the influence I can exercise over Louis, and thereby, in some measure, screen him and others from the insidious attempts of the ministers to exclude justice and mercy from his councils."

"Madam," observed Fénelon, "such acts as yours will not fail in promoting your peace both here and hereafter; but pardon me if I say, that firmness in the exercise of these noble intentions is wanting. Justice urges you to pursue the

path, and there must be no delay in obeying its mandates."

"Father, you are right; yet did you know all the various and conflicting trials of my situation, you would pity, not blame me. At this moment a circumstance fills me with perplexity. A few days ago, the Archbishop Harlai alarmed me with the intelligence of a new creed having sprung up at St. Cyr. You are aware of the doctrines of Madame Guyon? To me, they convey nothing that is unscriptural. Love for her Saviour, and towards her fellow-creatures, carried beyond the usual limits, are its leading tenets; and for these I prized the opinions as much as I admired the lovely foundress; and deep as is the interest I take in my own institution, it is not credible I should foster heresy within its walls. Yet Harlai alarms me, tells me dissent is brewing there, and would have me sacrifice, without delay to his inquiries, the life and the writings of the friend I have promised to protect. Honour and affection forbid my abandoning her, and yet the dread of displeasing Louis, and incurring

the anger of the holy church, bid me abjure her cause."

"Madam; she has abandoned fortune and friends for conscience' sake, and is by her own act poor and defenceless, while Harlai de Chanvallon is as relentless in his persecutions as he is violent in his prejudices. Bethink you; what will be her fate, if you desert her?"

"But, Fénélon; the king knows it and is irritated by the innovation; while the archbishop declares this dissent is controversial to the articles of our church."

"Madam, is it at variance with the doctrines of the gospel? Turn to that, and there at all events read, that charity to the desolate, respect for the humble in spirit, is acceptable to your Maker. Reject Madame Guyon; and in her youth and innocence she falls into misery you can ill estimate; abandon her, and the errors she may be thrown into rest on your conscience!"

"Father, these are harsh rebukes; and though they touch my heart, they do not convince my understanding. These heresies distract a church,

which should be at unity with itself, and therefore they should be crushed."

"Madam, the Almighty works in his own vineyard by what tools he pleases; and man must not presume to interfere with His will. Think too, that if the grosser temptations which beset the humble reach not these gilded portals, others as powerful are here, and piercing through the outward profession, discover the motives of the zealots who so warmly oppose the appearance of what they term dissent. Is Harlai, who with restless avidity seeks for each trace of nonconformity to the articles of the church, so close an observer of its other requisitions? Is Louvois, who would steep a whole country in blood from Languedoc to the utmost limits of the Alps, so devout and so attentive to the dictates of conscience as the religion he would so zealously defend, prescribes? Can love to his Maker incite him to persecute his sincere, if mistaken worshippers? Alas! could the despairing groans of the tortured protestants reach the royal ear, surely they would be stopped from crying aloud to that Heaven which is not

closed against their supplications. Words, Madam, are powerless to describe the scenes which at this moment disgrace our country. I will not grieve you by describing the anguish of many a tortured old man, of many an outraged maiden. But, while Paris is descanting on the importance of a few insignificant articles of its lukewarm faith, the mountains of Cevennes and the valleys of Piedmont attest my words, and ask if there be none to plead for them at the foot of Louis's throne; none, who for the sake of charity and its bright reward, will cast away the dastardly fear of man, and rescue them from destruction?"

"What would you have, Fénélon? what do you desire?"

"Madam, that only which your conscience and your religion dictate."

"It is impossible for me to interfere between the king and his ministers."

"The trial were worth making," continued the Abbé, "and if my words are unavailing, turn to the stronger argument of facts. Here, in the monarch's own city, the most ruthless iniquity

prevails, and even the great and the powerful of his court think it no disgrace to imbrue their hands in the polluted stream. A young and indigent maiden, her sole possession, the dangerous gifts of youth and beauty; her only defender, an aged and bedridden father, claims that protection which a queen of France owes to her subjects. That title, Madam, you refuse to wear; but you dare not reject its duties. Receive the sad orphan, though she worship at a different shrine from your own, and let it not be said that the forms of religion could be an excuse for turning from the poor and destitute. Were the Samaritans rejected by our Lord; and shall we turn from a Protestant?"

With the ardour of enthusiasm Fénélon knelt before his mistress; and she, the tear of pity glittering in her eye, the blush of hesitation mantling her cheek, spoke the consent he required; and the Abbé hastily rose to summon the protestant maiden, who now came, in consequence of Louvois' advice to implore his pity and protection.

CHAPTER VIII.

“YES!” exclaimed Madame de Maintenon, when once more alone; “like others, he also thinks me paltry and weak. Ah, Fénelon! thy acts are generous, thy feelings noble, but are they adapted to such a world as this? What is it he would urge?—I see it,—he wishes me to interpose with the king in favour of these protestants, whose persecution swells the list of Louvois’ iniquities. He is right; such horrors cry aloud to Heaven, and Louis is incapable of the cruelties which are ascribed to his commands; yet I dare not intrude on his counsels a theme so detestable as heresy. One word would banish me from his presence, for ever preclude any further exertion

of influence. It is not that I fear the censure of the world, or the loss of my high station; but to be bereaved of his affection, and deprived of the power of doing good. And yet, how inconsistently I act; Fénelon has displeased the king, and I admit him to my privacy—the protestants are odious to him, and I am about to take one of them under my protection! Oh, Louis! thy presence, which my memory loves to dwell on, I now dread to meet, lest thou shouldst find this stranger in the recesses of thy palace, the guest of thy bosom's queen!"

The door opened, and Madame de Maintenon started as the plain humble figure of our heroine of the Boulevards entered. But never had her heart closed against the unfortunate; and the seal which misery had set on the features of the visitor, adding to the interest of their beauty, spoke in accents which banished all remembrance of self, and with the tenderest commiseration, she inquired into the tale of distress before her.

"Victorine," said she, addressing the stranger

“thou sayest that persecution has deprived thee of every necessary, and that death threatens to seize thy last earthly stay. Where, then, when thy father’s term of suffering is over, wilt thou lay down the burden of thy sorrow, and find refuge from thy pursuers?”

No longer in a state of excitement, as on the night of her rescue by Louvois, the unchecked tears rolled down Victorine’s face, as she replied,—

“Alas, madam! I shall then be alone in a world which frowns on my faith, and rejects me from its compassion. My brethren in misfortune share my poverty, and can afford me no relief. Famine daily preys on our number, and I can but await its summons with patience.”

“But hast thou no hope of employment?”

“Who, madam, will employ a protestant? Those who are inclined to assist us are withheld by fear of the king and his rapacious ministers; and even the person who rescued me, from the worst evil that a female can dread, enjoined the strictest promises of secrecy in case I should ever

discover his name. To leave my father, or to move him is now impossible; and I have scarcely a hope of keeping the abode, procured by the charity of strangers, secret from the observation of the sinful assailant of my honour and my defencelessness."

"But hast thou means of procuring food?"

"Divided with the sad companions of our fate, the widow's cruse has failed, and ere I return to our squalid home, hunger will have already attacked my aged parent. Food! lady, is a sight these eyes could not behold without weeping like a child for pleasure."

What! thought the marchioness as she listened, are the fancied sorrows of the rich, their unsatisfied desires compared to such want as this? "Victorine, I can relieve thy need; this," said she, offering her money, "will yet support thee for some days, and when it is exhausted, return to me. Come, ere the hour of early mass, and here while others are steeped in forgetfulness, shalt thou find pity and relief. Here enter unobserved, thy admission secured by this

signet, and now," she added, pressing the weeping maiden's hand, "depart."

Victorine attempted to falter forth her thanks, and would have knelt in gratitude, but Madame de Maintenon forbade it, saying,—

"Nay, not to me, I am but the dispenser of good which our common benefactor has entrusted to my keeping, and thou must be gone. The precincts of the court are no safe harbour for unguarded beauty, and a strange faith. The hour fast approaches when far other guests will be here."

Thus saying, she conducted her to the door, and closing it behind her, returned to the bureau; and gazing on the empty purse, the contents of which she had given to Victorine, exclaimed,—

"Ha! my brother, thou hast deprived me of the power of replenishing it, and to how many solicitations must I now remain deaf! Yet can I not address Louis for a fresh supply? No, never shall it be said that I, like those proud courtes-

zans, trespass for my private wants on the public treasures."

She thought a while, then added:—"Yet the jewels he gave me are all mine, and though valueless to me but for his sake, are yet of great intrinsic worth; and from such a source I may indeed obtain the assistance I require. She drew forth a case of glittering ornaments, and gazing on them with interest, not with regret, selected the most valuable for her purpose. Then, with an open smiling brow, prepared for that morning's assembly.

To none of the guests who thronged Versailles that morning did Madame de Maintenon show such distinguished attention as to Mademoiselle di Solara; and from that moment the interest she felt in her, ripened into attachment, while the mild and yielding disposition of Anima was at once swayed by her influence. In every thing Madame de Maintenon became the arbitress of her judgment, and even in her religious opinions she looked to her to lead the way; and soon

a Roman Catholic in outward show as well as in inward weakness, the cross which once weighed heavily on her heart, assumed the identity in her eyes, of that holy refuge of which it was the mere symbol.

Madame de Saony was satisfied; and now but one circumstance was wanting to crown her wishes, and rescue her niece from the convent; namely, the offer of some distinguished marriage. She had not long to wait. The young Marquis de Pianezza had but lately returned from the Pyrenees, and the monarch's favour, his rich possessions, and the laurels he had already reaped in war, made him the object of universal attention. These advantages were, however, counterbalanced by a manner so stern, and so cold and haughty an address, that with the young and inexperienced, who had not learned to look beyond outward appearance, he was not a favourite.

The first evening of his arrival at court, the monarch presented him to Mademoiselle de Solara, but she received the introduction with a

start and a blush which added to the beauty he could not view with indifference. Anima was too well versed in the history of the Piedmontese valleys, not to know that his father had been the chief agent in the bloody massacre of 1655; his grandmother its cruel instigator.

Time and the frequent opportunities, Madame de Saony did not fail to give him of increasing the acquaintance, soon turned his admiration into a passion, which he at once declared; but Anima received the distinction, which so many coveted, with determined coldness, for she saw in him the descendant of the Vaudois' bitterest foe, and shuddering as she remembered that his name was graven on their annals in characters of blood, at once resolved to reject an alliance, which seemed sacrilege to her, though she dared not declare her motives.

In vain did Madame de Saony extol the beauty of his person, the splendour of his possessions, the high favour he enjoyed at court, and the renown his bravery had obtained in his own country as well as in France. Anima remained insensible,

and the Marquis became at length offended at her apathy.

Meantime the Abbess of la Vierge Sainte was not forgetful of her claims on the youthful heir-ess, whose wealth and high connections rendered her a desirable acquisition to the convent, and she wrote repeated and reproachful letters to her sister for neglecting to fulfil their father's wishes, and bring the expected novice to her care.

These letters Madame de Saony had evaded for a considerable time, but she now dared no longer put off the meeting which her sister so earnestly pressed. Could she have flattered herself that Anima's affections were engaged, she would no longer have feared for her a visit to the convent. She redoubled her efforts to fan into existence a flame which, she suspected, gratified vanity had already kindled; and, well versed in the history of the heart, she tried to rouse the suspicion of mortified pride, by representing the lover with coldness, and thus awaken a false passion in her heart, which would closely

resemble, if it could not emulate, that true affection which he sought.

Still Anima's heart misgave her, and her lips refused to speak the solicited assent. She sought Madame de Maintenon, to whom she disclosed her wavering thoughts, and from her wiser, purer mind, received the advice she so much wanted, to enable her to unravel those feelings which were all delusion; and, when she returned to her aunt, it was in the disturbed state which characterizes the mind that sees the path of duty, and is yet too weak to follow it.

Ill at ease, and lowspirited, Anima gave way to frequent waywardness, and in return Madame de Saony alternately chid or strove to flatter her into better humour. These were the first fruits of the seeds she had sown. Her niece's mind was out of tune, and had lost its customary sweetness.

Whilst in this mood, Anima suddenly expressed a violent desire to visit the convent of La Vierge Sainte; nor did the Baronne refuse a request, the

fulfilment of which, she felt, would best work its own punishment.

The appointed day arrived and Madame de Saony and Anima set out on their excursion.

Spring was just beginning to show its first signs of approach, the birds were chirping the tale of love from every bough, peeping primroses reared their delicate heads above the withered leaves, whose masses concealed the earth beneath: emblems of our immortal change, they rose from corruption, perfected in purity and loveliness.

There is something in the cheerfulness of the early spring, which awakens a feeling of melancholy in our breasts. It is not regret, perhaps it is a sting of self-reproach, occasioned when we view the joyous innocence of that fair creation, and compare it with our own dark selfishness and care. This sadness, enhanced by the consciousness of how little the fair scene around her harmonized with the disquietude of her own heart, oppressed Anima as she passed by the bursting groves, and through the perfumed air. Nature seemed to her to be pouring forth

the gratitude of universal joy, in a song of praise to the Almighty Maker, and to inquire if she was less blessed than his other creatures, that her heart should be filled with fretfulness and gloom.

Tears bedewed her cheeks, but they sprung from a better source than they had done for months; and though sad, the reflections that came with them were so soothing that she would gladly have extended the drive. The thoughts which filled her heart with the warm glow of love to her Creator, and admiration for his glorious works, did not predispose her to view with pleasure the artificial and pompous symbols of his power, or the cold tribute of praise, which were poured forth at stated intervals, before his altars in the convent of La Vierge.

At length they reached the massive building, passed its ponderous gates, and stood before the iron grating of the portal. The dull tolling of a bell announced the hour of mass; and the portress, who admitted them to the parlour, informed them that the whole community being engaged in prayer, the Abbess was not at present visible.

Anima had now an opportunity of scanning the apartment, the chilly neatness of which told no tale of social meeting, or cheering occupation. Beneath the latticed window, the garden extended its formal length; no hursting flower there interfered with the regularity of the smooth gravel-walk, the velvet lawn and the close-cut hollies that bounded its limits, and concealed the gloomier wall beyond. The luxuriance of nature had been studiously excluded, and her strong sounding call to ecstatic gratitude and praise, carefully silenced, within those precincts.

As the aunt and niece sat silently observing its aspect, the door opened, and the stately Abbess entered. Cold, stern and still in manner; with the fillet of white linen binding the pale forehead, and encircling the thin face, there was something forbidding in her appearance. With rigid formality she accosted her sister, and reproached her for so long delaying her expected visit. But unrepulsed, Madame de Saony warmly embraced her, and presented to her the

niece, who shuddered as she received the Abbess's salute.

The conference between the sisters lasted long, and Anima was requested to visit, in the interim, the dull, bleak garden. She accepted with dislike the proffered attendance of one of the nuns, during the uniform and cheerless promenade. There, two by two, she beheld the sad sisterhood walking: conversation excluded, hopes and feelings for ever crushed! How dull, how grievous a contrast to the life she had been accustomed to lead! "Far better," thought she, as she watched the slow procession, "to wed a man I admire and fear, than dwell with beings I should detest;" and glad to exchange the monotony of her walk, even for the dreaded frown and chilling address of the Abbess, she returned to the parlour, and as she sought refuge in close contact with the Baronne de Saony, forgot all her differences in favour of the kinder cast of her countenance, and the warmth of the affection she had experienced.

Suddenly the Abbess turned to her, and coldly

and severely expressed her expectation that she had come to remain with her, in compliance with her grandfather's will, till the completion of the year of noviciate would number her amongst the sisterhood of the convent.

Startled and alarmed, Anima dared not answer; but drawing nearer to the Baronne, whispered hurriedly, "Oh! tell her I am no longer free, my hand is promised, my heart is engaged."

Madame de Saony smiled, and taking up the words said,—

"Holy and beloved Abbess, Heaven has decreed another bridal for our niece than that you propose, and she is no longer free to take the veil you offer. Nor will you grieve when you hear that, under her monarch's sanction, she has determined to redeem her mother's error by bestowing her hand on a pious and gallant officer, whose arms, like those of his ancestors, have been directed against heretics, and have been an effectual retribution for their apostacy."

But the Abbess was far from admitting the validity of this plea. She became exceedingly

angry, and refrained not from expressing, in the strongest terms, her opinion of the course her sister had pursued.

Altercation arose on both sides, nor ended till, hastening her departure from a place she never entered with pleasure, nor left with regret, Madame de Saony summoned her attendants, and drawing Anima close to her side, hastily prepared to return, fearless of the darkening evening or its chilly air; and only when seated in her carriage, and on her road to Paris, did she give vent to the feelings which the interview had excited, and which spent themselves in warm expressions of affection to the niece whom she now indeed felt she had rescued. “And so, dearest Anima!” she exclaimed, “you prefer matrimony, to imprisonment in those dreary walls? Kiss me, as a sign our differences are forgotten, and your promise sealed to the Marquis of Pianezza.” The kiss was given, the look of reconciliation exchanged, and both sunk back, silent and fatigued.

The sun had long set, the sky had assumed a deep purple hue, lighted only by a long,

bright streak, the last remnant of the light of day which glittered at intervals through the wood they passed, and at every opening disclosed a view of the wide-spreading country beyond bounding the horizon with a dark line.

Anima gazed on it, and memory recalled the last sunset she had witnessed in Angrogna, the friends who had watched it with her; and pressing her hands over her eyes, she gave the reins to her imagination, and sought once more to realize the past.

Her silence was not unobserved by Madame de Saony, but she was on her own part preoccupied by the surrounding objects.

Their route lay through an unfrequented district which was thickly wooded, and she had observed a horseman occasionally passing as if dodging the carriage.

At that time Paris and its vicinity was infested by villains of every description, the scum of an unoccupied, dissatisfied population; and few people ventured to traverse the streets, or trust themselves alone in the suburbs at nightfall; and

Madame de Saony viewed with no favourable impression, the solitary traveller who seemed to track her road. In vain she tried to lull her fears and still the beating of her heart, which she concealed from Anima.

They were ascending a hill clothed on each side with dark stunted bushes, the long-tailed horses with difficulty dragging the cumbrous berline after them, when suddenly there was a cry, and one of the piqueurs who accompanied the carriage, as was usual at that time, rode to the side of it, exclaiming, “Des voleurs!—des assassins!—au plus vite!—nous sommes perdus!” then putting spurs to his horse, he fled, followed by his companions; and the Baronne beheld herself and Anima left unprotected to the mercy of their assailants. One indeed remained, a young man whom she had brought from Languedoc, and who, far from deserting his post, urged the postillions to make one effort to push on out of the danger. “Allez donc, ventre à terre, sacre—poltrons!” he cried, and riding to the foremost horse, plunged his own spur into his reeking

side. The horse started forward, but a strong hand grasped the bridle, and the terrified animal, rearing upright on its haunches, fell back, and effectually stopped all further progress.

All was now confusion; the postilions cried for mercy; François strove, by dealing powerful blows with the butt end of his whip on either side, to free the horses from the men who hung upon them. Meanwhile a desperate-looking figure had presented himself at Madame de Saony's side, and crying "*Lab ourse ou la vie!*" menaced her with a loaded pistol, while, with trembling hands, she strove to comply with his commands.

A similar call awaited the terrified Anima, who, totally incapable of governing the expression of her fear, uttered shriek upon shriek, as the rough form who had suddenly interrupted her meditations laid his grasp on her, and, exasperated by her screams, strove to lift her from the carriage. But François saw, and with a sudden spring seized him round the throat and dragged him to the ground, and there for some

moments, well matched in strength, they struggled in the desperate contest of life or death. But the robber was armed, and, aided by his comrades, soon obtained the mastery over his opponent. Overpowered, pressed to the ground, François beheld the robber's knife gleaming before his throat, and knew there was no longer hope for him. He closed his eyes, and tried to pray. There was a flash, a report, a heavy fall. François looked up—the robber lay dead beside him, his comrades were flying, and horsemen were seen leaping through the thicket.

“Codardi, Francesi, morite !” cried a voice, and the Marquis di Pianezza galloped to the spot. He had set out from Paris to meet Madame de Saony on her return, and thus opportunely had come to her rescue. His followers pursued the fugitives, while he hastened to Mademoiselle di Solara, who, pale as any marble statue, lay on the ground beside the carriage, and, raising her in his arms, recalled her with difficulty to herself.

Some moments elapsed ere Anima could re

cognise her deliverer and join in the profuse expressions with which Madame de Saony testified her gratitude; but when at length order was restored, and they prepared to recommence their journey under the protection of the marquis's armed escort, she more than repaid his exertions by the confiding look which, by the glare of the torches his attendants bore, he saw her fasten on him.

He could not refuse the imploring gaze, with which Anima seconded her aunt's request to him, to occupy the vacant seat in the berline; and his hopes rising in that dear vicinity, ere the drive concluded he had again urged his suit to her, and received from her quivering lips a favourable answer.

Delighted at his success, elated by the very adventure which had overpowered her, Pianezza forgot his usual sternness of manner, and, pressing her hand to his heart and lips, vowed to guard the precious boon while life remained. Nor did she withdraw it till they reached the Hotel de Saony, and were welcomed by all the

comforts of home after the dangers they had passed—dangers from which he had rescued them. The cheerful light cheered them as they arrived, and La Baronne was fervently ejaculating her thanks, when alarmed by a shriek from Anima, who on alighting beheld her white dress dabbled with blood!—the blood of the robber whom the Marquis had slain in her defence!

Alas! was it thus the bond of union was sealed; thus the compact signed!

Shuddering, she sought her apartment; the omen haunted her through that night, and often, alas! too often afterwards!

But the impression was not then suffered to remain; her aunt diligently strove to efface it, nor left one moment of time unoccupied for reflection, to startle Pianezza's promised bride. And her conscience deceived, her mind amused, Anima persuaded herself she was happy—deceived herself with the belief that she loved.

One feeling alone oppressed her with dread, a dread she had never known before—that of meeting again Madame de Maintenon.

CHAPTER IX.

FAR different scenes were passing in the palace of Versailles, from those which occupied the inmates of the Hotel de Saony. Louvois had not miscalculated the effect of his plans, nor the power of the bait he had offered to his intended victim; but, though the snare was laid, the prey was not yet entrapped. Cautiously, meanwhile, he instilled the poison into Louis's mind, which he intended should destroy her influence. Her daily drives; her morning meetings with Mademoiselle di Solara, the Vaudois heiress of such great wealth, were all duly reported, while the hesitation of the latter to give her hand to the Marquis di Pianezza, was adduced in support of

his insinuations. Nor did Louvois fail to relate the history of the Protestant maiden of the Boulevards, garbled so as to serve his purpose, and confirmed by the fact of her daily visits to the palace, where, under the protection of Fénélon, she received the charity of her benefactress.

The monarch's mind, easily swayed by prejudice, was ever prone to brood over the suspicion of a fancied injury. Self-esteem from his earliest youth had been his predominant passion; and the unparalleled success he had hitherto met with, both in war and love, had not failed to increase its force. But now the rosy clouds which adorned the rising sun of his glory, were beginning to darken into gloom, as it verged towards its decline; and soured, by disappointment, at a change so unexpected, he wanted an object on which to vent the unholy feelings it occasioned; and the Protestants of France and Piedmont offered themselves as the victims. On the former, his vengeance had already been wreaked; over the latter he still

held the scourge which other hands were to inflict. His anger became daily inflamed by the reports which were made of the invincible courage and untiring patience of the unfortunate Vaudois; and to the reigning Duke of Savoy, Victor Amadeus, he destined the office of executing his cruel designs against them. Many saw and felt the impolicy of this cruel persecution, but few ventured to remonstrate. One only, nerved with courage at the instigation of Fénélon, raised the voice of entreaty for mercy at his throne; but her accents were unheeded, and served but to add fuel to the fire which was smouldering against her in the monarch's breast.

The alteration of Louis's manner, his coldness and severity, were not unnoticed by Madame de Maintenon, and she bewailed in secret the diminution of his affection. But still the calm and dignified empress of herself, she bore her grief in silence, and remained the ever ready companion of his gloomy moments—too happy when permitted to sooth his cares, and too wise to intrude upon him one complaint of her wrongs. Yet

she longed for the explanation she trembled to ask, and, in her hours of anxiety she turned to the only ray which could cheer their darkness. Her service to her Maker, her love for his suffering creatures, formed a harbour for her troubled thoughts, and foremost among these was the now wholly unprotected Victorine, who daily received, from her hands, the relief which she and her almost famished brethren required. Her father had been released from his sufferings, but the slight protection he could afford his child was amply compensated by the powerful support, which report already declared, had been afforded her by the monarch's consort, and which was an effectual shield against any insult.

Nor was Madame de Maintenon's kindness less magnanimously extended to Madame Guyon, whose doctrines, containing much that is beautiful, had drawn down upon her the disapprobation of the Archbishop of Paris, and who, but for the support of her powerful friend, would have been exposed to his threatened persecution.

Unconscious that Louis was aware of the extent of her private charities, and fearful of meddling in public affairs, Madame de Maintenon could not for a moment attribute his growing neglect to the real cause, though the unwelcome suspicion would sometimes flash upon her mind; and she who was superior to every other weakness, would have sacrificed the nearest and dearest object to her dread of his anger.

It was after some such reflections as these, that the announcement of a visit from the king filled her with an alarm, which rendered it difficult for her to command the calmness of manner which had acquired for her, from Louis, the playful name of "*Vôtre Sérénité*," and, with a beating heart, and quivering lips, she saw him enter her boudoir, with the proud majesty of his regal demeanour, rendered more stern by the expression of indignation.

He took the seat she offered; and, without noticing the dignified submission of her standing position, began to upbraid her with severity, for the many infractions of his will, of which he supposed her guilty.

Without pausing to give her the opportunity of self defence, he accused her of introducing into the institution which was destined for the instruction of the children of his subjects, heretical and seditious opinions; of privately encouraging and assisting the rebel crew who opposed themselves to his religion and his arms; of employing the public money, his too confiding generosity had placed at her command, for unworthy purposes; and last, and worse than all, of receiving into her privacy the priest whom he suspected and disapproved, and of bestowing on him the confidence which he himself only had a right to claim.

Long and silently Madame de Maintenon listened; fear at first forbade her answering, but this vanished under the stronger sense of injustice. Too proud to justify herself from false accusations, and too conscious of her real situation to forget the respect due to a monarch and a husband, she patiently waited till he ceased, and then quietly observed—

“Sire, it is not for me to refute charges, of which a little reflection would convince you I am

innocent; but I am ready, this instant, to seek again the seclusion from which you raised me."

The monarch, however, was in no mood to be soothed by such a reply, and, conscious that he had been in some degree unjust, he was only exasperated by her submission. He enumerated the benefits and honours he had heaped on her, and setting them in array against, what he termed, her ingratitude, told her that female influence was no longer destined to stain the glory of France, and she must seek another home, where she would be deprived of the power she had abused, and the favours she had sought for her own private purposes;—he paused; she answered not. He renewed his reproaches, till, weary of her silence, he commanded her to speak; and then, in the deep sorrowful tone of her rich voice, she replied—

"Sire, unused to such commands, your subject knows not how to answer. You spurn me from you,—I submit; thankful that the ties which unite us are still a secret from the world. He, before whom they were consecrated, well knows the submission with which I prepare to obey your

will, and leave a grandeur I never coveted: as a prince, you have commanded what, as a friend and a husband, you might have obtained by the simplest intimation of your wish; and, as a subject, I dare to reply, that you have offered me, this morning, an insult and an injury."

Nerved with all the dignity of conscious innocence, she gazed on him for a moment with a look, beneath which he quailed. Still he continued his invectives; and ended by bidding her prepare to retire to the shades of Maintenon, there to remember in solitude the friend who had presented it, and whose love she had disappointed.

These cruel words she heard; and fixed her eyes once more on him, who reminded her of the love she had regarded as her only good on earth, and the thought that she was losing all claim to it, rushed tumultuously on her brain, and gave to her expression a thrilling look of tenderness and reproach. But she trusted not her voice to express the anguish with which her bosom laboured; and, as he prepared to depart, she still stood, pale, proud, yet submissive, before him—the

tears, of which she was scarcely conscious, coursing in rapid succession down her cheeks. The monarch saw the touching sign, which attested, unbidden, the grief within; and, ere he reached the door, turned to whisper, "Farewell; Françoise." The tone was that of brighter days; the look, that on which she loved to dwell; and the sudden change at once destroyed all self-command, and looking on the countenance where once more beamed the ray of affection, her heart melted within her, and she sunk prostrate at his feet.

He raised, and soothed her, recalled her to herself, and poured into her willing ear the rich consolation which effaced the anguish she had endured; and the hours flew swiftly as he again assured her of his love, acknowledged his injustice, and witnessed the smiles he loved to receive.

She forgave him, forgot her sufferings and the stronger claims she was willing to sacrifice to his desires; and when the moment came in which the monarch must depart, and the expectant courtiers hoped to discover the issue of the long conference they had anxiously watched, she was

ready to make whatever promise was required; and as he left the boudoir he said, and not in vain : “ Françoise, see that, ere the next moon rise, the marriage of Mademoiselle di Solara and Marquis di Pianezza be completed, and that the convent of St. Cyr be rid of that obnoxious Quietiste and her weak confessor.”

Her assent was given ; the claims of the poor and of the oppressed, if not sacrificed to the commands of a monarch she feared, at least yielded to the wishes of a husband whom she adored.

Aware that Louis expected immediate compliance with his wishes, Madame de Maintenon immediately prepared to alter her whole line of conduct; that night she wrote to Madame Guyon, and requested her to withdraw from St. Cyr on the ensuing day. The next heavy task was to desert the friendless Victorine, and the wretched band whose sufferings, she felt, her momentary relief had only served to protract till a worse period even than before had arrived, and with a sigh she whispered to herself,

“ Alas ! I dare no longer offer them the trifling

aid that rescued them from starvation or crime. Hard sacrifice: required, not in obedience to a husband's love, but to a monarch's caprice. But Louis asked it with the tone of love, and I must comply. Though Victorine may come here no more, she shall not be without a friend." Again she considered, and then resumed: "Yes! Anima di Solara must be her guardian—must bear her hence. And there again is a bitter pang. How shall I urge that poor girl to consent to a marriage she dislikes, and which my own judgment condemns. Hard, hard tasks has he given me to perform!"

Many a sigh revealed, throughout that night, the anxious thoughts which disturbed her repose; and when the morning found her preparing to receive the weekly assembly of visitors in the state apartments, it was with the haggard look, and pallid hue of exhaustion. Once, and once only, that deadly whiteness yielded to a crimson flush: it was as Fénélon approached, and she received him with a forced and unnatural reserve. The only comfort that morning brought her, was when

Madame de Saony relieved her worst apprehensions, by announcing that the marriage was settled between her niece and the Marquis di Pianezza ; and it was with unfeigned pleasure that she congratulated her, and beheld Louis's look of approbation as he heard the news.

But the face of Louvois, like the gloomy sea before a coming storm, met her glance and disturbed the pleasanter current of her feelings. That look revealed to her whence the shaft which had wounded her had sped ; and she shuddered to think how true had been its aim.

With respect to Mademoiselle di Solara, her satisfaction was short. Each subsequent interview disclosed the artificial state of her young friend's heart ; and Madame de Maintenon sighed to see her rushing on a fate which she feared must wreck all her happiness, without daring to speak to her one warning word.

Yet, with the young bride, all seemed to go smoothly. The restless state of her mind excluded reflection ; and the splendid preparations for her bridal, the friends who flocked around to

exalt her good fortune, and the stream of adulation which even the monarch had deigned to augment, all occupied her thoughts. Nor was it till the very evening preceding the wedding day, that any warning voice rose within her heart to tell of the precipice on whose verge she stood ; and when too late to retreat, a busy demon seemed at her side whispering in the solitude of the night, in “ the voices of the dead, the tale of other days,” and raising the glittering veil, which had disguised the reality, discovered it to her in all its nakedness.

She strove in vain to silence the voice, or drown it in the many trivial objects which, for so many days, had excluded its sound. In vain she gazed on her lover's picture, his last gift, as it hung before her, and tried to deceive herself into the fancy that she loved it for the donor's sake ; in vain she attempted to raise her voice, as formerly, in prayer. Conscience stood by, and warned her of a neglected Maker : forgotten in the day of prosperity, and sacrificed to other allurements. Still less could she lose in sleep

the recollection which haunted her ; and when the morning dawned, and her aunt summoned her to assume the bridal dress, no rest had visited her aching eyes.

Pale, quivering with fear and regret, at length she appeared : her brow encircled with the orange wreath : her form veiled by the delicate draperies of her Mechlin dress : the glittering diamonds, the monarch's gift, sparkling on her heaving bosom and snowy arms—like morning dewdrops on the lily's purity.

Long lines of admiring guests filled the church of Notre Dame, as the Archbishop of Paris read the nuptial service and dictated the faltering accents, with which the Vaudois bride pledged her faith, in a strange ritual, to the persecutor of her country.

All wondered at her loveliness, and extolled the splendour of the marriage ; but few sympathized with the inward feelings which oppressed her heart, and dimmed the brightness of every external circumstance that surrounded her.

One, indeed, there was, whose prayers were

poured forth in deep and fervent devotion for the young bride, and who watched with almost maternal solicitude her pallid cheek and ill-expressed sigh.

As Madame de Maintenon gazed on the group before her, she recalled with sorrow to her mind, with what different feelings she herself had appeared before that altar, and with what pure feelings of unselfish devotion she had twice uttered those vows, which even thus had been difficult to observe in their exact demands of obedience, self-denial, and forbearance ; and she trembled for the young bride before her !

CHAPTER X.

THE streets of Paris were thronged with gazers, as the bridal procession of the Marchioness di Pianezza proceeded from the gates of Notre Dame, and acclamations of applause rent the air when the beautiful bride herself appeared; but they fell discordant on her ear. A heavy knell was striking at her heart, which rose above every other sound; and while it seemed tolling for the days that were passed, she felt that she was now separated for ever from every dear and early custom, and that under the guidance of one almost a stranger, or known only as the deadliest foe of her country and her early religion, she was entering on a path of life alike new and unpromising.

She was to leave Paris the same day; her attendant, and now it seemed her only friend, was Victorine, whom Louvois had raised from misery, for the purpose of hurling her benefactress from her high station. But aware of the danger, Madame de Maintenon had escaped it, and by sending her protégée, under the care of Anima, to a distance, had ensured her safety, and provided her young friend with a companion, whose high and steady principle she felt might be some safeguard to her among the many temptations which would assail her. She took the precaution to conceal from Victorine that her new mistress had once professed, though now she had abjured, a faith similar to her own, and enjoined on Anima the stricted reserve on the subject; for, as she watched the young bride at the altar, she thought she perceived that the remembrance of her early creed yet lurked in her heart, and that it needed but little encouragement to burst forth again into existence.

But where were now the friends, between whom

and herself, Anima had just placed an impassable barrier?

We left them sorrowing for her loss. We return to them, when the change had passed over her heart and name, leaving a canker-worm for the time, when the world should have blighted their fair flower, and a false creed should have usurped the place of their simple worship. They were, however, spared the bitter knowledge, which would have yet increased the aggravated miseries they had endured since her departure, and they still thought of her as of a lost lamb who desired to return to the fold.

It had been the office of the pastor of Angrogna, during this period, to travel from valley to valley and spread the sad news of expected persecution, and to sound the inhabitants on the amount of courage or of patience they possessed, to meet the coming storm. Almost everywhere he found bitter feelings of indignation, and a burning desire to revenge their wrongs, and, in some instances, a hopeless dejection, inclining them to lie down

and die, without one effort in self-defence. But all were unanimous in refusing to comply with the decree which required them to submit their children to Popish baptism.

Vainly did the pastor exhort them to await patiently, and to resist in silent firmness the coming tide. Tears and lamentations were their reply, and with the memory of the horrors their ancestors had undergone, bloody tales of other days ran from mouth to mouth and increased the general panic. Still the minister sped on his course; but no longer, as heretofore, welcomed with glad rejoicings and humble prayers for blessings on his weary way, but received with tears and gloom as the messenger of woe.

His daughter accompanied him, and tried to sooth his anxiety, while she concealed the sorrow which burned in her own bosom.

With him she had regretted the loss of Anima, and mourned the far heavier affliction which threatened her country; but the first had not been all bitterness, and watered by the very tears shed for her friend's departure, a hope sprung up, un-

acknowledged even to herself, of future bliss. It was nurtured even by the daily recital of his regrets which Durand poured into her faithful ear; and though in their long evening walks, Anima, and the tale of his enduring love for her, formed the theme of his discourse, bitter as was the subject to her, yet she loved even so to minister consolation to his wounded heart.

Meanwhile the orders of Savoy had been disobeyed throughout the valleys, and already the sad consequences were felt. The inhabitants were commanded to leave their homes within three days, and saw themselves compelled either to wander defenceless to a strange land, or to be expelled at the point of the sword. Either way, certain destruction awaited them. To obey, was to meet starvation in their unknown path; for, encumbered as they must be with the helpless and infirm, how could they carry sufficient provisions for their support, till they should reach a spot where the inhabitants would be charitable enough to shelter them from their enemies, and provide them again with houses, in lieu of those

from which they were now unjustly expelled by a prince whom they had served and obeyed.

But one method remained, and that was so slender that many refused to adopt it, fearful of exasperating still further the anger of their oppressor. This was to await his armies, sword in hand, and defend, to the last drop of their blood, the fastnesses which had protected their forefathers. Should they succeed in this, they might yet linger on, till their friends the Swiss should send assistance; but for this, the strictest union of thought and effort was requisite. Arnaud used his most strenuous endeavours to induce them to make the attempt; but his influence, till now ever successful, seemed failing. Some drew back in fear, while others paralyzed the courage of their bolder brethren, by their entreaties that they would throw down their arms, and supplicate as faithful subjects the mercy of Savoy. The wiser saw the risk of such a scheme with a prince who, deaf to every feeling of honour, had never hesitated to violate the most binding treaties; and they turned to the annals

of past days to attest how every breach of faith to the too confiding Vaudois had been sanctioned by the court of Rome. The time rapidly drew on, and still hesitation and disunion marked the pastor's hopes.

Once again they met in the spot consecrated to their worship; and, for the last time, Arnaud poured forth the prayer, and explained the Scripture to his kneeling flock; but, as he concluded, he addressed them in the following words:

“ In a few days, other sounds will echo through these valleys, and other forms will people them, while we shall be toiling over the rugged Alpine paths, and behold our children stretch forth their little hands for food we cannot give, then sink under the agonies of starvation, till death relieves them. We shall see our wives point to those valleys, where their dwellings yet remain, and reproach us for our cowardice in deserting them, and our folly in preferring the lingering death which awaits us, to the bold, and, it might be, successful attempt to rescue

them at the sacrifice of life: nay ! they shall not say so. Our friends in Switzerland shall not raise the finger of scorn, as they point out the spot where lay our mouldering bones, and tell their children it is the grave of those, who quailing before the tyrant's sword—trustless of the Almighty's power, who for sixteen centuries had preserved the remnant of his true church—fled from the place he had assigned them, and, leaving his altars to be desecrated by the foe, found the punishment of their faintheartedness in the very path they had looked to for salvation ! Nay ! my children, He who created this glorious world for the abode of his creatures, can defend us from our enemies ; or, if indeed we are to perish, let it be in His cause ; that, with our dying breath, may come a hope that another land will open to our view, where the oppressor will no longer wield the sword of injustice. Vaudois Protestants of the early church ! vindicate your right to the proud title ; and remember, that He who strengthened the unarmed champion of Israel, against the Philistine in the

pride of his power, will protect his chosen band against the united armies of France and Savoy! Already the tide of war pours its devastating waves into our valleys; their troops defile through the frontiers of Lucerne, and the clash of their arms will ere long resound in our fastnesses. Men of Angrogna,—withstand the first shock; be firm!—and if our brethren do but join us, we may yet foil the unholy expectations of our foes, and drive them from our land!"

A shout of universal assent followed this exhortation, and then, kneeling with his flock, the pastor uttered an earnest prayer, and the devoted band rose strengthened and comforted.

It is in the hour of danger that woman's courage awakes; and when the stouter heart of man is oppressed by difficulties, her spirit rises, and she looks calmly at the sorrows before which, in brighter moments, she had quailed.

When in their lone parsonage that evening, the father and child met, and he began to prepare her to await the approaching storm with courage and resignation, Marie answered him

with a loftiness of tone, and a fearlessness of expression, that both surprised and inspired him.

“Father,” she said, “dost thou think that I dread the war-cry about to sound? Dost thou think the tales of horror with which these valleys abound, the sufferings and death of our forefathers, appal me? and that, to escape such a fate, I could abjure my faith, and seek safety in apostacy? Nay, my father, thou dost not think thus meanly of thy child! Remember that thou hast taught her to trust in other power than that of man, and in that protection to feel her safety, and to seek her guerdon beyond this transitory scene, which her ancestors have bathed with their tears and their blood! She is ready to meet death with an unflinching eye, beholding in it but the portals to a brighter future, nor trembling if it close with difficulty on this. Perhaps you think that I shall grieve to leave this native spot, consecrated by so many prayers, and hallowed by my mother’s grave; but—I leave it not, my father. No! no other clime shall

rise to my view ; in Angrogna I will live, and in Angrogna die : best, brightest hope to cheer me on my path to that only other home I will acknowledge.”

Her eye shone with enthusiasm, and her father folded her to his bosom in fond delight, as she resumed in a tone of earnest entreaty:

“ My father, there is one thing I would ask—it may be my last request ; oh ! do not refuse it. Let me leave thee, but for this one evening. The people vacillate, they tremble and think of yielding ; and unless our exhortations inspire them with greater firmness, our cause is lost.

“ A woman’s courage will shame their faint-heartedness ; let me then, while thou art visiting some, go amongst the rest, and ere the morning sun dawns on the pennons of our foe, our exertions will not have been in vain.”

“ My child, bethink thee,” rejoined the pastor, “ separated from my side, should the war trumpet sound in our valley, what will become of thee ? Should I fall, far from thee, and thou be con-

demned to the horrors of captivity, aggravated by uncertainty, respecting my fate ; what wilt thou do?"

"Trust in Providence, father, and die," said the maiden. "Refuse me not my request. To stay here through the long night in inaction, whilst thou art incurring danger, and undergoing fatigues, beyond thy strength, were torture more than our oppressors can inflict. I would ask to accompany thee ; but to visit all, nay half, thy flock is impossible : the duty divided will be quicker done. Oh ! let us not by untimely considerations, for our own safety, suffer the sparks, thy evening discourse kindled, to expire ere they burst into a more permanent flame."

"But where is Durand?" asked her father. "His very life seemed his hope of revenge—resistance the very atmosphere he breathed—who then, better than he, could inspire these peasants, and assist our endeavours?"

"My father," replied she, with a crimson blush, "you are right. Courage, determination, are his very existence ; but he is gone to the valley

of Lucerne, to wake in its inhabitants the manliness he confidently relies on here. There he will stay till he succeeds; and if words fail to inspire them, he will try the effect of example. Again, father, I implore you, let me go also, and perform the duty I am called to."

"My child!—go—and be the Almighty's blessing with thee. But ere we leave this threshold which may be drenched in blood, ere we revisit it, let me strain thee to my bosom,—last,—only pledge of thy mother's love, and true memorial of her virtue and faith. Marie, shouldst thou be left sole inmate of this home, where she gave thee breath, promise that death shall be more welcome to thee than apostacy, its terrors less appalling than Papal favours!"

Her heart heaved, her bosom swelled at these words; but the feelings they invoked were deeper than the spring of tears.

"Father," she hoarsely replied, "we shall meet; yes, we meet again—here or hereafter, 'tis one!"

"Marie, thou art right"—as he spoke, he gazed on the carving over the chimney, where, accord-

ing to the customs of his country, were engraved several scripture texts, and as Marie's eyes followed the direction in which he pointed, she read—
“Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

“There Marie is thy consolation! when I am gone, imprint it on thy heart, as thy Saviour's and thy father's legacy.”

They crossed the threshold of their natal dwelling, and passed the grave where, safe from the agitating fears they endured, lay the wife, the mother they had so deeply mourned. The moon was shining on the turf, no stone marked the spot, but memory more faithful than the sculptor's art had raised a monument there, which not even time could efface.

They steeled their hearts against the softening recollection it brought, and hurried to their task. Once the pastor looked back; and as the low roof and white walls of his loved dwelling met his eye, a tear rose there, which even the Christian's resignation could not restrain. But as he

gazed, hope again sprung up, and he felt, if indeed his flock stood firm, this precious spot might still be his!

Urgently did the father and daughter address the inhabitants; and not in vain. His influence; her fearlessness, who, on the eve of bloodshed and danger, travelled alone and unappalled from house to house, calling on men to smile at perils which a woman feared not, and reproaching them for their cowardice at deserting their homes, roused an unexpected enthusiasm.

Marie had scarcely left one dwelling unvisited, and time had so imperceptibly stolen on, that the night had nearly passed away, when she stopped at the door of a cottage isolated from the others; but the dark and solitary path which led to it had been unnoticed by her, and no hesitation had marked her bearing till then, and then she paused ere she lifted the latch.

“Onfroi,” she cried, in an uncertain voice, “Onfroi, may I enter?” But there was no answer, though she reiterated the request; and in tender accents she then called to the Crétin: ‘

“Open, poor Pierre, and let a friend come in; open the door, I say, for Marie Arnaud.”

The Crétin was evidently within, for a low and not inharmonious murmur, like a child's attempt at song, betokened his presence; but still there was no response to her request, till a heavy footstep sounded within, and Le Bouquetin himself undid the door.

The interior of the dwelling was characteristic of the habits of its owner. Its furniture was rude and scanty. Its walls were hung with implements of the chase, or, here and there, adorned with its spoils. In one corner alone appeared any attempt at comfort; there, lay a few trifles made of horn, ingenious playthings, to amuse the tedious hours of the Crétin's existence; and, covered with a chamois hide, a low couch, which formed his bed, from which the idiot had now risen, but had nestled down on the floor close beside it.

Onfroi Vigano appeared in his usual strange garb; his rifle, which he had been cleaning, was

in his hand ; and with a fierce tone of annoyance at the intrusion, he asked,

“ Who art thou, that comest to disturb me at the hour when wise men sleep, and fools and madmen alone keep watch ?”

He fixed his piercing eyes upon her, and the unsteady glances of their wild expression were more unnatural and appalling even than the fixed stare of the helpless idiot. But Marie boldly answered,

“ Onfroi, I come to ask thee to join the general levée; to lift that strong arm in thine own, and thy country's defence—whose fame, years ago, was so nobly established in Lucerne and Angrogna. The armies of Savoy are at hand, once more ready to pour the torrent of persecution over these unhappy valleys; and my father and I are abroad to collect our band and invite them to resistance while yet there is time.”

“ Ha !” cried Le Bonquetin, “ is it so, Marie? Now, then, is the day of vengeance come; now are my hopes fulfilled, and rivers of blood shall

wash out the dark stains of former days! Now, then, it is no longer a dream, the oft-repeated vision of the night, which beckons me on, whispering that the hour is arrived and I must gird myself as the champion of the Lord, to avenge his slaughtered saints! On, maiden! on! In His name I prophesy success to our cause, death to our foes, and will myself lead the way to victory."

So saying, he began hastily to arm himself with the long-barrelled rifle and the other warlike weapons which stood near. Frightened at the ferocious manner of his uncle, more intelligible than words to his darkened intellect, the poor idiot crept gibbering to Onfroi's side, looking up into his face with a piteous and beseeching expression, which showed that there, however fiercely the storm might rage, he was accustomed to find a certain refuge.

"Pierre!" added Le Bouquetin, as he perceived his approach, "my poor child, come to me, come; none shall hurt thee! This rifle can defend thy life while the spirit of him who be-

queathed it to me, the noble Giavanello, will inspire me with power to avenge his blood, and that of those who perished at Rora !”

He then strode from the cottage, dragging with him the terrified idiot; and left Marie to pursue her way to other hearths. She persuaded most of their owners to follow her, and then led them to the presbytery, where she hoped to meet her father.

The red streaks of the rising sun were just visible in the horizon, and the gray tints of morning began to wear a rosier hue, when her attentive ear fancied it discerned the sound of the hollow drum and shrill trumpet afar off. Nor was she mistaken ; it was, indeed, the distant roll of musketry that she heard, dealing death and desolation in Lucerne.

“ They come ! they come !” she whispered to herself. “ Now the close tug for life or death !” But the sounds died away, and no voice having echoed the thought of her heart, she fancied herself deceived.

Was it fear that flushed her cheek, and lent

the brilliancy to her eye ? A thrill of agony, indeed, drove through her bosom as she thought of her father, and what she should do if he came not ; but there was no time for hesitation ; she must act, or all would be lost. She gazed but once, with intensity ; the next moment she descried his approaching figure, and turning to the assembled crowd, said, “ Behold your chief!—he comes to lead you to victory ! He who so often pointed to you the path to Heaven, now comes to lead you to the bourne which alone divides you from its attainment, or to the earthly liberty you have so often sighed for. Brethren ! Vaudois ! the foes, are here. Be religion your watchword, and God your defender ! ”

Her eyes flashed as she spoke, and without another word or look, she sped on the wings of excitement to the pastor. “ Father,” she cried, “ they are here—the armed troop. I hear their war-sounds. They, too, are here, the devoted band, waiting but for you to lead them—ready to lay down life for the cause ! See, the stragglers I have collected on

all sides rushing to one point of defence, and eager for revenge!"

"Vain hope, my child!" answered the pastor. "Lucerne has given up the contest, and laid down arms, on a promise of restituted rights; and, deprived of their aid, our efforts would be useless."

"No; not useless, my father; He whom we trust will not fail us. Better,—yes, better to die here, than to fall into their dreaded power. Hide these sad news, and lead us to the foe. This report may yet be false; and then how shall we repent our credulity!"

"It is too true; a fugitive brought the sad tidings. A skirmish, indeed, took place; but scared at the overpowering numbers, they laid down their arms, and demanded mercy."

"Mercy from Victor?" cried Marie. "Sooner the lamb ask mercy of the devouring wolf! Oh! where, where was their wisdom? where their faith?—And, oh! where was Durand, who swore to lead them to revenge?"

"Fallen, Marie, fallen in the first onset;—

the brave young man redeemed his son, but lost his life."

"Hah!" shrieked Marie; "then we will follow his bright example. We, too, will defy the steel he feared not; and, in another world our spirits may meet without shame! Now indeed, I say, on!—on, my father! I am right, our victory was presaged by dreams: those messages from on high: and, while our band is ready, urge them to the field!"

The pastor consented, and having commanded his child to remain with the crowd of helpless and terrified women in the deep fissures of the rocks with which Angrogna abounded, and which seemed prepared by Providence for such an hour, he awaited the arrival of his countrymen. The generality of these were stout mountaineers, men trained from infancy to athletic exercises, whose activity, assisted by local advantages, might well make up for the want of military science and arms. With the former, indeed, Arnaud had gained some acquaintance, both from early experience and literary research; and -

for the latter they had their *couteaus de chasse* and long rifles, of which their constant use in sporting had given them complete mastery. Jackets of chamois hides; caps of the same material; leathern belts holding the stout hunting-knife; horn pouch; and in some instances an old pistol or two; thick ankle-boots; and tight leggings, formed their equipment.

Thus prepared, they came with hearts beating high with hope, pressed onward by the sense of oppression, and excited by their faith in the scriptural promises as applied to their own case. Wild prophecies were added to these by the aged seers, whose influence was great over a people naturally imaginative, and imbued with veneration for every thing that savoured of antiquity.

They were led by Le Bouquetin, who advanced shouting triumphantly, "The Lord hath delivered the enemy into our hands, and in his name we will smite them hip and thigh!"

They sought the most advantageous post, where, concealed in close ambuscade, they could mark the advancing troops defile in regular war-

like array, their banners floating in the breeze, and their whole appearance denoting the order of a well-disciplined army. They did not quail as they leaned over the crag which had concealed them, and hurled huge fragments of rocks in the way of the troops to harass and obstruct their progress, and give opportunity by the delay for the determined aim of the unerring marksmen, not one of whose rifles was levelled in vain.

And now there arose from the valleys a din of confused sounds, which struck terror even into the wild tenants of those regions: the chamois fled terrified from its recess; the eagle rose from her nest; and nature seemed aghast at the violence of man. There was the bursting of shells; the peals, echoing from rock to rock, of the field-pieces, directed with little effect against the crags which protected the Vaudois; and the shouts and roll of the drums to encourage the troops to push onward, amidst the steady dropping fire, which told with precision from practised hunters.

At length, exasperated by a loss which astonished them, some of the bolder leaders of the

French and Savoyard troops attempted to scale the rocks, and return the fire. One, less perpendicular than the rest, and covered in part by wild brambles, seemed to invite the skirmishers to ascend; but there Le Bouquetin and Jean Frache had stationed themselves, while the Crétin, who, though insensible to all else, would not be separated from his uncle's side, stood obedient to his command; and, with the sagacity of mere instinct, loaded and reloaded their spare pieces; and one by one the adventurous assailants dropped beneath the sharp fire of their rifles.

Still, they succeeded in throwing some hand-granades among the peasants, and these, exploding, added to the din; while the shrieks of the expiring soldiers, and the wail of women, who, from afar, lifted up their voice of anguish to the throne of Heaven, mingled with the war-cry which pierced the blue canopy above.

Long did that fight last, long in her agony of suspense did Marie await its issue. She dared not leave the spot to which her father's express command confined her, but it was a racking sus-

pense to know not how the day fared; to expect every moment to learn their defeat, and see a troop of savage tyrants rush on their retreat, and drag them forth to torture and misery, far worse than death. Yet she bore that agony for many a long hour: pouring forth the earnest prayer, and soothing the companions of her terror.

Each in that deadly strife had some deep cause of interest; there, the wife thought of the husband she adored; the weeping girl of the father, or the lover, on whom she depended; and the anxious mother clasped to her breast the helpless tribe around her, and groaned as she remembered one was not beside her!

But in that hour of suffering—greater than human nature could have borne with such fortitude—religion threw her light, and the mourners could listen to the lessons of divine hope, and pious resignation, their pastor's daughter preached.

CHAPTER XI.

THE cold winds of the early year were wildly blowing through the valley of Angrogna; no vegetation relieved the dark hue of its craggy walls, or softened the effect of the snow-capped mountains, which reared their tops against the cloudy sky of a February morning. The overhanging rocks frowned on the level ledge, which a few nights before witnessed the Vaudois assembled in worship, and on the rivulet, whose swollen current now showed occasionally on its roughened wave, a darkish streak, indicating that deeds of blood had stained its waters.

Some soldiers were scattered over the plain; their bright uniform seemed as incongruous

with the scene as the loud tones and execrations with which at intervals they broke the silence.

“Cap Dion! Camerade,” exclaimed one, “these Barbets have left us tolerably provided with game; and had we but their bones to roast it on, with an Arles sausage and a flask of Roussillon for a finish, we should fare well”—and he exposed some pieces of chamois and dried apples, purloined from the neighbouring cottages.

“Ay,” replied his companion, “but how long will this stuff, such as it is, last? ’tis said their stores are scanty; and their tribute to Savoy stripped them of every necessary; our ammunition is not much, and unless we find speedy supplies—”

“Hush, fool; you don’t think we shall remain here long? No, no; we are not to be left in these gloomy defiles; so soon as the Barbets are despatched, we rejoin the French.”

“Ay! ’tis soon said,” answered the other; “but these Barbets are leagued with the devil, and are tougher than his grandam; witness the

execution they did some nights ago. They are as hardy and as long-winded as their own wolves."

"May the devil, then, take his subjects to himself, or we will speedily send them to his kingdom; methinks they may succeed in crushing us beneath their missiles, but let us come to fair play, hand to hand, and then we'll soon see who will have the mastery—"

"Yes, when we catch them; but they have as many doublings as the hare, and holes as the fox, and what is more they turn and make their teeth meet. Who would trust himself in these narrow defiles, where one by one we must fall into the snare of the evil spirits they invoke?"

"Evil spirits!—you Jacques, who drink yourself to sleep every night, and never confess, may fear them; but to the devil, say I, with the fears he hatches."

"What!" cried Jacques, "would you risk yourself in that dark wood where the Barbets' ghosts roam by night, and where only three days ago we heard such strange sounds, and saw such a strange apparition,—half human, half child,

half man? The bare remembrance makes my blood freeze!"

"Ay, that would I," replied his comrade, "and meet them gaily if they came."

"What! the men you murdered, the girls you——"

"To the devil with your fears! Don't I confess, and does not Father Anselm absolve readily all those peccadilloes against heretics? What need I fear? Trust me, Jacques, absolution is a fine thing; we may sin in peace, nor be one jot the worse body or soul!"

But how long, think you, we stay here?"

"Not long: our generals have retreated; we shall follow them. They calculate, there cannot remain more than a dozen or two of these loup-garous here, and starvation must soon destroy them; they dare not venture from their concealment in search of food."

"Were I the captain," observed Jacques, "I'd blast the rocks and drive them from the burrow, and so finish the business and begone. 'Tis

mighty gloomy here, amidst lone rocks and haunted demons."

"Yes! but he has orders to spare powder, and not to waste, on these poor wretches, what were better worth the swaggering Dutch."

"Well, I wish 'twas over; here we have been three weeks without action."

"Ay, and no pilfering, Jacques."

"Why, you must say, 'tisn't pleasant nor natural to risk life for nothing; here we stood for thirty-eight hours in these beastly ravines, to be picked off with their long barrels that never miss, or be buried beneath the rocks they cast on us, and had no reward. Now, after standing the whizzing of cannon-shot before a city's walls, a little plunder is refreshing."

"So it is," answered his comrade. "Here we had nothing but a few Vaudois' carcasses, lean and stringy enough; and of these not half so many as equalled our own loss; and since, only an occasional hunt to keep us in practice.

"But that of last night," he continued, "was fa-

mous fun, when we caught those mumbling preachers, whose blood even yet stains the rivulet."

"Sacristic!" said Jacques, "they died game though; the devil a prayer did they vouchsafe to us, nor did they wink an eyelid before the flash of the carabines: 'twould have been other guess-work, I trow, in Father Anselm's greasy convent. But heard you aught of the bout in Lucerne?"

"Not much; at the first onset some fought as savagely as wolves, and there was one fellow who strove to lead the others, and worked wonders for a time; but our troops were too strong for him, and 'tis said a blow from one of their muskets silenced his mutinous bawling. I think they called him Durer or Dubourg; but however that may be, the poor rebels soon humbled themselves after the first volley—knelt for mercy, and believed every promise Don Gabriel made them. So he decoyed them to Fort la Tour, to hear them ratified, and there caged them, to sing out their text, "Put not your faith in princes;" which they did lustily, and baited the governor till he ordered

them irons, and dieted them on ditch water and mouldy bread."

"And good enough for the heretical dogs; why not despatch them at once, and save the government expense?" asked Jacques.

"Picket me, if I know; they say the duke has fits of compassion sometimes."

"Faith!" said Jacques, chuckling, "how I should like to see the Barbes' faces grinning, through the bars of La Tour! it would be some reward for the trouble they gave us to return the compliment, and mark them down now without risk, as they did us behind those crags, but come—"

At this moment, a shot broke the conference, and ere the report of the rifle from whence it came broke on his companion's ear, Jacques fell forward — his ribald speech unfinished — his voice for ever hushed in death. The bullet had entered just above the eye, and piercing the brain, left him time but for one gurgling groan as he fell.

"Ave Maria!" ejaculated his companion, cross-

ing himself, and looking round; “none but the Devil could have fired that shot, no one could have approached this plain unseen, and there is no place of concealment within reach of human shot! But ’twere best to be prudent—alas! poor Jacques;” and casting one mingled look of fear and regret, the soldier retreated in double quick time. No sooner had he disappeared than, first an arm holding a rifle, then part of a figure, ferocious in aspect and gaunt with hunger, rose above a rock, many yards distant from the spot, and muttered—

“Ay, my good rifle! well hast thou served my turn, and triumphed in the cause of Truth.”

A long, low, hysteric laugh, unmeaning and irrepressible in its sound, answered these words; but the speaker was invisible. “Hush, Pierre! be still!” said the marksman; “or I may fail to protect thee as before”

It was Le Bouquetin, with the unhappy *Crétin* whom he had contrived to shelter and to save even till this hour, sharing with him every morsel; and for the sake of the parent’s memory,

preserving the spark of life in the wretched being beside him, with a tenderness which strangely contrasted with his otherwise rugged nature. He vanished however, instantaneously, and all was again still.

Several weeks elapsed, and silence reigned in Angrogna undisturbed but by the mirth of the soldiery, whose loud revelry rung through the valleys where hymns of praise had before resounded.

The inhabitants of the adjoining districts of Perouse and Pragela, with the exception of a few, had found in captivity the reward of their credulity ; for their persecutor blushed not to violate the promises with which they had lured them into the snare; and believing the hated sect to be entirely expelled, withdrew the troops preparatory to distributing the vacant dwellings among their own followers.

Again, then, for a short period, the valleys were quiet, and the retiring troops felt convinced that the race was wholly extirpated; believing it impossible for any human beings to withstand,

unsheltered, the severity of the season. And if at times strange sounds issued from the rocks and tangled woods, they imputed them to the agency of the evil spirits, who, they supposed, still haunted the dwellings of the heretics, in spite of the exorcisms of the Romish priests; and they gladly left these fancied unhallowed scenes, to join the rest of the army now about to assist France against the allied forces, who threatened to circumscribe her overweening power.

In those mountainous regions the early year is a period of intense severity; and, in the hurrying blast and drifted snow, the trembling peasant feels a prophetic fear of the avalanche, whose dreaded power may in one short hour sweep away his dearest treasures.

On the evening in question, the wind howled fiercely through the rocks, and the pale crescent of the moon, rising behind a dense mass of clouds, was soon obscured by the fast falling snow. The chilly gloominess of the scene seemed indicative of the presence indeed of supernatural apparitions; and two figures, who now crept stealthily

along, muffled in concealing cloaks, helped to verify the impression.

Slowly they approached, gazing at each other with the suspicious eye of fear; their lean and haggard forms more spectral than human; but a look of affection, shot across each countenance, as they met, with a bright ray, which showed they belonged to no region of darkness.

“Hist, Marie!” said the taller of the two,—
“discovery is death!—didst not thou hear a sound?”

“Nay, father; none but a Vaudois would venture abroad on such a night; but we are safe in nature’s alarms. Oh, father! my heart has yearned for this hour; and death now would be no hardship!”

She clasped her arms around him, and gazed with intensity upon his face.

Oh, holy filial love! thou canst sweeten the bitterest hour, and soften the deepest sorrow.

“Father,” resumed Marie, “when last we parted on that dread night, when the foe entered our valley, I little thought to meet thee

again. Oh, those long hours of suspense ! But, thank God, for this blessed moment, compared to which the past is nothing, Death has been busy amongst us since we parted; and if thou hast seen it wrenching in sudden violence the life of the strong and the brave, I too have watched it, not less awfully summoning the helpless and the weak.

“ In that dreary cavern I have seen the bereaved mother sigh forth her last breath,—the young wife, deprived of the necessities she required, sink beside her new-born babe, and thank the Almighty, with her latest powers, that both were taken from the sad scene of their existence. Oh, my father ! what should we be at such a time without the consciousness of His omnipresence ? A starved and helpless band ; how shall we await in patience the dread summons which daily diminishes our number ? Our last store is exhausted ; and those who nobly went forth in search of more have not returned. Wild herbs and roots are our only subsistence ; and when those fail, the lingering

death of famine must be our portion. Say, is there no escape?"

"None," said the father, "but to follow the example of the other valleys: they laid down their arms, and live—"

"Yes, but in captivity and dishonour, with the daily prospect of a violent death. Such were no escape."

"Then we must endure and die. The emissaries of the oppressor seem to be withdrawn, and a bold attempt to descend into the valleys might procure us food; but at the risk of discovering, by our track, the retreat of our scanty remnant, and thus exposing them to torture and death—"

"No, 'tis impossible. But, father, could not we fly to Switzerland? You know each secret defile, and might lead us through undiscoverable paths."

"Aye, Marie, but amid crashing avalanches and over unfathomed precipices; through perils such as tongue could not describe, nor our weakened band endure."

"Let us but try, father. 'Tis but the choice

between the fury of man and that of the elements. The latter are more merciful."

"Who shall support the weary steps of the women, and revive their drooping spirits?"

"He who led the Israelites through the Red Sea!"

"My child, that was a miracle we dare not expect. See, already even thy eager spirit quails before this hurrying blast, thy steps sink in the yielding snow—thou canst not stand."

"Father! if we stay we die, useless to others, a weary burden to ourselves. If we go, we may rouse the generous hearts of the Swiss, and perhaps stir them up to rescue our brethren in La Tour."

"Vain hope! the troops of Savoy and France are too powerful for them to risk their displeasure on our behalf?"

"But they are Protestants!" was the proud answer.

"Dost thou think, then, Marie, our little band could stand the fatigues of traversing by night such heights as mock the empire of the skies, and

force their way through paths where e'en the chamois fears to tread ?”

“They fly from death, and worse than death. If discovered, we have no mercy to expect; witness the sufferings of our too credulous brethren. But tell me, were there no particulars of that fatal skirmish, no news of the slain?”

“None, dearest Marie, but that there fell our brave Durand. Ah! thank God, that she whom we grieved to lose, is spared the suffering of knowing her lover's fate!”

“But he is not dead!” almost shrieked Marie. “Firmly as my soul can trust in earthly things, I believe he lives, and will return!”

“Nay, had he lived, never could his countrymen have shown this fatal cowardice.”

“My father! never till I see the remains of what once was Walter, will I mourn him dead. Yes, he languishes in the dark horrors of an endless captivity; his arm is powerless to strike, his heart oppressed with anguish. He no longer breathes the pure air of Heaven; and he sighs to be at rest. Shall we leave him in this misery, with-

out one effort to deliver him? Father, I beseech you, let us go to Switzerland."

She knelt in the deep snow, before him; her hair laying in dark folds about her, her clasped hands recording the urgent desire which streamed forth from her eloquent eyes.

"Rise, my child, from this unbecoming posture, and listen to reason."

"My father, hear me! With you, with our sad companions, I go to Switzerland—or I go alone: traverse unknown regions, regardless of their dangers, with the prowling wolf for my companion, the marmot for my bedfellow; and when there, wring tears of compassion and promises of deliverance for my brethren in captivity. Or, if I fail, then will I pierce my way to Holland, and kneeling at its prince's feet, tell the tale of our wrongs. Father, we part! This act may be one of disobedience to thee; but Heaven inspires me, and by its holy vault I go!"

Thus she urged the pastor, and in so doing only expressed the wishes of her countrymen. The

dread of discovery, the gnawing pangs of hunger, were more dreadful in their eyes, than the untried dangers of the Alpine path; and their best chance of success, was in starting immediately, ere the new inhabitants, who were to repeople the valleys, should arrive, and cut off their retreat. But it was the season most to be dreaded in that climate; and they must meet its rigour, undefended by adequate clothing or proper support; and divided from each other, seek, in small parties, the most secret and inaccessible paths. Yet no dissentient voice arose, and Arnaud feared to oppose a desire which seemed to him a providential means of preserving the scanty remnant of what he firmly believed to be the primitive church; and trusting in Divine protection, the little flock set out, in number about threescore, wholly unprovided for any contingency.

There, where yawned the unfathomable abyss, or rose in perpendicular height the snowy Alp, the husband urged his weary wife, and, tottering beneath the weight of his helpless offspring, could not afford her the aid which might save her from

falling into certain destruction from that giddy verge; there, the mother heard her infant wail for food, with nothing to offer to its eager hands but the wild berries she disputed with the birds; there, the child, impelled by the strong love of life, deserted the aged parent, whose cry of anguish pierced the pinnacle of snow above, till tottering on its base, the melting ruin overwhelmed him in its fall. And in the clear and frosty sky they could yet see in the far distance the blue smoke meathing its airy shapes in the valleys below, and proclaiming that others were gathering around the hearths lately their own, while they, scattered like leaves before the storm, friendless, homeless wanderers, were going to seek in a strange land, a doubtful charity at the hand of others!

Yet, as the dusky red of the setting sun proclaimed the toils of each day done, and the darkness of night about to veil its horrors; in the pitiless blast, and the bedded snow, the protestant flock still knelt beneath the stormy sky, and poured forth their gratitude for the life that yet remained, and as if unmindful of individual suf-

fering, prayed for their more miserable brethren in captivity; then raising their hymn of praise drew from the inspiring sounds fresh firmness and endurance to meet the coming danger.

Still in the most awful exhibition of his power, presented by the elemental war around, the Vaudois preserved their faith, their trust in their Creator's love; and confiding in their earthly guide, his minister, pursued their way humbled not terrified, before the evidence of their God!

Arnaud still cheered and directed them, and his heroic daughter smiled at her own sufferings, but wept for those of others; and becoming a ministering angel to their miseries, soon won from them an affection which made them dread peril or exposure for her, more even than for themselves.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was the beginning of April; when the birds pour forth their full tide of song, and nature offers up her rich incense to the great Giver of every blessing,—the air redolent with life and love, when the soft blue waters of the Lake Lemman woo the shores with melodious murmurs, and the heart is softened into kindness by the profusion of enjoyment, that an unusual bustle pervaded the streets of Geneva. The labourer had left his work, the craftsman his occupation, and the jeweller his glittering shop, to crowd round the doors of the Stadthaus, and satisfy their curiosity on some subject of apparently universal interest. At first the tumultuous sounds of the

eager multitude, precluded the possibility of finding the object of their search; but soon a groan of indignation, and a cry of commiseration, made it evident that these were called forth by some act of injustice, some tale of dark distress.

At length the crowd dividing, disclosed a group of beings, whose emaciated appearance and looks of anguish, scarcely left them a similitude to the well-fed race who had gathered round them.

Though hanging in tatters, which barely answered the purposes of decency, their clothing yet retained the marks of their national costume, and attested the truth of their assertion. Their number might exceed a dozen, and of these most had sunk exhausted on the steps of the spacious hall, where they demanded admittance.

Foremost of them was an old man, whose tall figure seemed sinking under the extreme of exhaustion, and a girl by his side, whose tottering frame, and drawn expression of want, revealed the misery she had endured. In hoarse accents the former strove to address the crowd, but his voice

failing, his companion took up the tale; and when the doors opened, and, clad in the official robes in which they had met to transact the public business, the Syndics appeared, she addressed them with an enthusiasm which even then lent beauty to her haggard countenance.

“ Protestants—rulers of a land where the tyrant’s sword dares not strike—the remnant of a people, who, for upwards of two centuries have resisted the persecutions of France and Savoy, now stand before you ! Expelled from our native land, driven forth in the season of snow and storm, we have yet, by the help of our God, triumphed over the dangers of our route; and traversing the dark horrors of the mountain district, by a circuitous and hidden path, have come to ask mercy and protection from strangers to us in all but our faith; and as that holy bond teaches us to expect forgiveness in heaven, so let it be a claim on earth, for the famished Vaudois. Behold these sinking frames—these breathing skeletons ! and think they were once men of strength and power ; ay, and happy, like yourselves !

Send us not away amid the horrors of the whirlwind and the storm, but take to your sheltering bosom, the fast-expiring ray, of what was once the light of Christianity!"

Collected for that last effort, her whole strength was poured forth in the passionate entreaty; but when she ceased, exhausted by her exertions, Marie, fell prostrate at the Syndic's feet, the arms she had raised in supplication extended upon the ground, her long hair shading the noble proportions of her form.

The pitying Syndic raised her in his arms; but a wild cry of alarm burst from the lips of her countrymen, as they saw her lifeless form; and even the kind promises and proffered attentions of the Swiss were vain to pacify them, while they believed their beloved deliverer had expired.

At length the blood began again to steal through her veins, her eyes unclosed, and she gazed on the companions of her toils, sought her father with anxious glances, and rejecting the assistance of the surrounding group, with tottering steps she reached his side. Then came the ex-

pression of sympathy in their woes, indignation at their oppressors, and closely urged offers of friendship and protection; and the Vaudois felt the sincerity of their simple friends, who feared not to shelter them, though outlawed and persecuted, friendless and forlorn.

Sweet to them was the balm of kindness, the luxury of repose, after the sufferings they had undergone; sweet, the soft air that blew so refreshingly over the dimpled lake, after the icy horrors and howling winds of their mountainous journey; but with it, alas! came the remembrance of those dear friends whom (sinking beneath their miseries) they had been compelled to leave alone on their frozen bed, to bleach in death, unsheltered by any protection, unhonoured by one tributary tear; and the wild thought of retaliation rose in their bosoms. Then too came the remembrance of the others of their band, whose fate lay wrapped in the same dark uncertainty as of those who, in Lucerne, had lain down their arms to obtain the horrible imprisonment, in which perhaps they still dragged

on existence. But faintly did the majority of them feel, in comparison with Marie Arnaud, who deemed each toil had been in vain, till something were done towards the rescue of the captives in La Tour. It was her midnight dream, her morning thought, and both alike centred in one dear remembrance; and made her feel life to be a void, while Walter languished in captivity, and its loss a trifling sacrifice, to save him. Still, no opportunity opened for exertion, no plan was thought of which promised success; and it was only in the privacy of her own heart, that she could indulge in her wild but favourite imagination.

Meanwhile, lodged in the house of one of the Syndics, Arnaud and his daughter were treated with a respect and affection almost amounting to veneration. The persecutions which the Vaudois had withstood under so many princes, had adorned them in the eyes of other protestants with the crown of martyrdom; and their undisputed claim to the title of the primitive church, had given them a dignity superior to temporal power,

and which being vested in their minister, whose far-famed piety and devotion, proclaimed him worthy of the appointment, made him an object of the deepest attention to the people of Geneva. The flagrant violation of every duty enjoined by the right of nations and of humanity, also worked powerfully in their favour, and stirred up a strong desire to advocate their cause; which was maintained by the deep interest excited by their appearance, especially by that of the aged pastor and his daughter, who rarely separated from each other, called forth an admiration for their respective virtues, which ripened into the warmest affection.

Not unmoved, had Ernest de Grafenried, nephew of the generous Syndic in whose house they were received, beheld the virtue and loveliness of Marie Arnaud; her never-failing assiduity to minister to her father's wishes, her earnest devotion, her self-forgetfulness, and still more that dangerous tear which trickled silently down her cheek as she sat closely employed in

some feminine occupation, and indulged (as she fancied unobserved) in her dearest meditation.

In the prime of life, and high in command at Berne, the Count de Grafenried was deservedly esteemed for his amiable qualities, and respected for the situation he held. He frequently visited his uncle at Geneva, and although withheld by inadequate age from sharing with him the honours of the Syndicate, his own office of Banneret entitled him to a place in council; where his opinions were sought and appreciated by his seniors in rank and years. The acknowledged heir of his wealthy uncle's property in addition to his own, every circumstance seemed to combine to gild his existence. Nevertheless, Ernest de Grafenried was restless in mind and spirit; for the inactive life his political avocations required, ill suited a temper which had learned to love stirring incidents. In his earlier days he had joined the Dutch service, and had witnessed the ravages of Louis XIV. in the Palatinate; and the indignation he had then felt, was revived by the

scene (now acting in the sight of Europe) of the barbarous persecution of the Protestant cause by the French monarch and the Duke of Savoy, and heightened by the sight of the interesting sufferers before him.

The craving he had felt for fresh excitement, was now but too readily satisfied, when, with his whole soul moved with indignation in her cause, he day by day watched the character of Marie—its superiority, its rare and touching combination of female tenderness and manly fortitude—and he felt that such a companion was alone wanting to fill the measure of his lot.

A mystery, however, hung over Marie's deep dejection, which he could not fathom; and while it served to heighten his growing love, was calculated to repress any outward manifestation of it on his part.

When, indeed, apart from her, Ernest considered their relative positions, and weighed the many advantages he could offer, counterbalanced as he acknowledged them to be by her unparalleled merits, hope rose in his breast, and he deter-

mined to delay no longer in wooing her to share his station. But when they met again, there was that in her manner, which although unreserved and open, checked him whenever he attempted to address her, and seemed to freeze the expressions which rose to his lips.

Anxiously he strove, with his worthy uncle, to anticipate her every wish and taste, and was more than repaid by the smiles which sometimes lighted her countenance as he pointed out to her the beauties of his native land. He took her to gaze on the placid loveliness of the lake—beside whose shore the city lay in profound stillness—its white waves gleaming in the trembling moonbeam, or making the light boat skim its surface; and he would envy the evening air, she said she loved, and the soft breeze, which fanned her cheek and echoed the sigh she intrusted to its keeping; but not even by the silent shores and murmuring waters, dared he breathe the passion which consumed him.

While the heart of de Grafenried was thus disturbed, Marie's grew calmer as a more settled

purpose arose in her breast. For two months, she had borne in silence the grief which oppressed her, unrevealed even to her father. For two months, had tried the friendship of her countrymen; and now confident of it, she began to hope they might be induced to make some effort in favour of the captive band in La Tour; and, certain that the influence of religious feeling would be stronger than that of mere compassion, she determined to persuade her father to urge upon them as a duty to Heaven, that they should attempt the deliverance of his countrymen. But on imparting her project to him, his desponding feelings raised an obstacle she was ill prepared to meet. And while determined herself to act, though uncertain by what means, an opportunity occurred she little expected.

One evening, as she sat alone at her work, her father having gone to visit an invalid of his flock, the Count entered, and apologizing for the intrusion, asked if in any way he could add to her comfort.

She answered gratefully, warmly; but he saw tears still swam in her eyes, and with a tone of deep interest he resumed,—

“Can nothing, Mademoiselle Arnaud, reconcile you to your absence from home, nor lessen the remembrance of your sorrows?”

She felt, in the tenderness of his manner the presence of a friend, and though confiding in it, hesitatingly replied,—

“Nothing can ever quench these tears, while there are Vaudois suffering the horrors of captivity. While they linger out a wretched existence in chains, their friends cannot, must not, admit the feeling of joy!”

“Pardon me, Mademoiselle, but is it wise thus to nourish a grief, pernicious to yourself and useless to others?”

“Useless!” she exclaimed, starting up; “call it not useless. No; did the Almighty miraculously preserve the scanty remnant of his followers from the hand of the oppressor, to forget their country and their brethren in a foreign land; and to smile while the dispensation he has in-

flicted still oppresses them? Was it for this, our forefathers preserved inviolate the precious deposit of their faith, and handed it down untarnished to posterity? The tears we shed over our castigated flock are acceptable to our Almighty Shepherd, and till they are delivered it is a duty to weep!"

"But is there no way, Mademoiselle, in which I can sooth the misery of these burning drops?"

"Actions! sir, not words, can benefit us," replied Marie.

"If, by shedding my life's blood in your countrymen's cause, Marie, I could serve them, its last drop should not be grudged!"

"And by shedding of blood, can their cause, I fear, alone be redeemed, most noble friend! I am not selfish when I thus plead; I do but urge a Higher will; I implore thee and thy colleagues to use your power to rescue the helpless and ill used. For thy own country's good I speak. What must that land expect at her Creator's hands, which could forget his followers in another clime, and leave them to endure persecution and

captivity without extending one helping hand to stop their sufferings? If discord should ever cast her flaming torch o'er this now peaceful land; or if war should spread its bloody pennons over its smiling vineyards, and the scared inhabitants lift, in the wild agony of despair, their eyes to Heaven, with what bitter anguish will they then remember those, whom they clothed not when naked, nor succoured when in want! with what hope look up to Him whose followers they neglected in the dungeons of La Tour?—Listen," she added, grasping his hand, "there, in horrid damp caves, the mother groans over her dying child, sees its stiffened form sink beside her, and gazes on its mouldering remains till the scream of madness wakes her from her silent grief; there, the brave, the powerful, are stretched on the torturing rack, till the agonized frame forces from the parched and unwilling throat the dastard's cry of anguish, and the soul escapes to Heaven, to receive the guerdon of its constancy; and pitying angels weep, to think how far worse the condition of that brother who saw these sufferings, and passed by unheeding!

—Oh! I implore thee, let not that case be mine; but think of some plan to save my brethren in La Tour!”

She clasped her hands, and gazed on him with a look of entreaty he could not resist; but there was no weakness in her supplication, and De Grafenried felt that the expression of his own deep passion would have been almost profanation.

“Fear not, Mademoiselle,” he answered. “The devotion and the sincerity of the Swiss are not so weak that they can forget their Creator’s cause, or the sufferings of their friends. Their injuries shall not want consideration in council, and I will be their most strenuous advocate.”

“The Almighty will shower down on you his richest blessings in return; and though valueless, my earnest prayers, my warmest gratitude, will be yours.”

“Oh Marie! call it not valueless—a reward beyond my utmost exertions!” and he pressed the hand he still held with fervour; and that

moment might have decided his fate; but Marie continued.

“Oh, happiest moment I have known since I have left Angrogna! You promise, and I rely on your promise, to forward some scheme of relief for our long-lost friends. When next we meet, perhaps you will bring yet gladder tidings, and I shall have greater cause to bless your name; but now,” she added, “we must part, my father comes, and at this late hour he must not be disturbed by subjects such as henceforth we shall scarcely refrain from discussing.”

Delighted at having obtained, as he believed, a path to her affections, Ernest retired, and the moments seemed to lag till he could begin the work she had enjoined; but he was not unconscious of the difficulties of the measures, by which alone her desires could be effected. While the perfidy of Savoy inspired the Swiss with an indignant desire to punish it; the power of its court, backed by the ponderous strength of France, made them fearful of involving themselves in dissension; though on the other hand this appeal for

succour on the part of the injured Vaudois, at a period when a strong feeling of chivalry yet reigned, was not one to be rejected.

As the youngest on the bench of councillors, this feeling might yet more strongly move the Count, independently of any warmer motive, and he advocated their cause with a warmth and eloquence which won many partisans to his side; and aided by the evidence which Arnaud most pathetically gave of the patient submission of his countrymen, and the fearful injuries they had suffered, he awoke the wish in every member of the council to take their part; and, after many tedious debates on the best mode of proceeding, they decided on sending to Turin a deputation of the principal men of the city, accompanied by Henri Arnaud, to implore the mercy of Victor Amadeus in favour of his Alpine subjects.

It was resolved, that after describing their unshaken loyalty and humble submission, the deputies should beseech him to release the captives who had surrendered to the promise of his generals, and who had since languished for six months in

all the horrors of imprisonment; and should these representations prove useless, they should declare their resolution to call on the Protestants of Holland to assist them in punishing his violated promises to the unhappy Vaudois.

The rejoicings with which the people received the information, and the readiness with which the other Cantons agreed to it, showed the generous forgetfulness of individual danger, the noble spirit to resist the yoke of tyranny and oppression, which should characterize the sentiments of every free people; and joyfully were the preparations made for the approaching departure of the embassy.

Proudly, de Grafenried carried the news of his success to Marie. He had earned a claim to her regard, and it assisted him in overcoming the timidity with which he formerly approached her; still he thought of delaying his bold request till his efforts should be crowned, and the returning deputation should bring a favourable answer to their requests. But to part from her with his tale of love untold was difficult, and perceiving her fixed determination of accompanying her

father, he anxiously wished to join the party also; but it was in vain, important duties detained him, and up to the evening before the day on which they were to set out, his plans were all uncertain. The few hours which remained ere perhaps he would see her again, returning brilliant with success, he spent with Arnaud and herself. The old man was deeply affected as he blessed and thanked the Syndic and his nephew for all their exertions, and a yet warmer feeling influenced the hope he expressed of meeting again under happier circumstances.

Ernest, heard his words with filial respect; and when he begged Marie to take one last view of the summer sun, now tinging with its golden hues the dimpled lake, and on her assent, drew her arm within his own, he felt indeed he might look forward to a happier meeting.

Marie, was softer and kinder on that evening; the hope of success, of again beholding the object of her devoted affection, had melted and subdued her heart, and it was almost with re-

gret that she gazed on the smiling lake before her, and thought she was about to leave its borders.

And he, who lingered by her side, and felt the soft influence of the balmy air, and the pressure of her tender hand, could not withhold the secret of his heart, and let her go from him, ignorant of the weight which oppressed it.

“ Marie,” said he, “ ere the autumnal leaves are scattered on these now verdant shores, you will have sought in the court of kings the fulfilment of your wishes—the crown of our united efforts, but will you have forgotten these lands, and he who pointed out their beauty?”

“ Forget you!” said she, “ no, never; while this mind can think, while this heart can beat, the Vaudois shall not forget you in their brightest moment, or in their most fervent devotion.”

“ Marie,” added he, in a lower tone, “ there is a fonder remembrance even than that, and such would I claim from you.”

The seriousness of his manner, his ardent

gaze, struck her, and in a more tremulous voice than was her wont, she replied,—

“With earnest gratitude for all your kindness, generous friend, I will ever remember you.”

“Oh Marie! not with *gratitude*—say with *love*, I implore you; gratitude must be mine alone; could you imagine the devotion with which I have adored you, you would not be so coy in giving me the answer I have prayed for, and worked to deserve.”

There was a hopelessness in the look, with which alone she answered his passionate address, that struck chillingly on his heart, and with a faltering voice he continued,—

“Give me not, I beseech you, that cold forbidding look; and if, indeed, I have done wrong in profaning the moments you have consecrated to your lofty patriotic affections, by the expression of less heavenly, though not less ardent feelings, forgive me; and when the time arrives, that free from such agitating thoughts, you return to Geneva, then let me pour forth un-

chidden the devotion of my heart, and hope to meet a kinder return."

"Never!" she replied, with a crimson blush, and a scarcely audible voice; but it smote with an appalling sound on Grafenried's ear, and he gazed at her with an expression of agony, which well nigh unnerved her; till she forced herself to repeat with dignity, "*Never*; forgive me the pain I inflict, but in kindness I repeat, *never* can this heart be yours!"

"Never!—oh Marie! could you know the pang of unrequited love, you would be more merciful, you would not thus barbarously crush with one word, hopes so long, so fondly nourished."

Again he gazed on her, and the deathlike pallour his inadvertent words had called up to her countenance, might in a calmer moment have revealed the circumstance which in reality blasted all his hopes. But to tarry, after such a declaration was impossible for either party, and in mournful silence they parted; she to seek the solitude of her apartment, there to find that the measure

of her cup of sorrows was only now filled, by that bitterest drop, to a generous heart, of inflicting a wound on another—that other, one to whom she owed her own and her countrymen's hopes of preservation!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE palace of Victor Amadeus, at Turin, was a specimen of the taste and elegance of Italian architecture; and while the spectator wondered at the strength of fortifications which in after days baffled the ingenuity of a Vauban, he was no less delighted with the graceful proportions of the interior and its galleries of art.

There, beneath porticoes which would have graced the classic temples of Greece, marble flights of steps led to terraces where bloomed, in costly vases, a thousand exotics, perfuming the air, while the lover wooed his mistress with the sweet evening serenade. There, might you see

the broad river glittering in its serpentine course through the fertilized plains, now joyous with the vintage and the glad song of the peasants at their cheerful tasks; and further off, the silvery peaks of the Maritime Alps which concealed the valleys where the protestant subjects of the Duke of Savoy had lifted up in vain the prayer for mercy, and now sighed in all the hopelessness of captivity.

Their prayers, their sighs, reached not the ducal palace, where the sounds of festivity were alone heard; and more fearful of his powerful neighbour and ally, the King of France, than of breach of faith to his devoted people who had always obeyed and often essentially served him against the bandit forces of the people of Mondovi, Victor Amadeus had not scrupled to let loose the bloodhounds of war, in compliance with Louis's request, and strip his subjects of possessions he had no right to demand. In fact, the crafty policy by which alone he retained a territory, surrounded by hostile and rapacious powers, had stifled every better sentiment in his

bosom; and the success which had raised him from an inferior prince to an important ally, strengthened a passion for intrigue and self-interest which deafened him to the cries of humanity, and made the act of oppression which depopulated a country and exterminated a whole race an easy task to him.

His talent in state affairs; his intrepidity in war; his possession of the only accessible path from France into Italy, in right of which he obtained the title of Jailer of the Alps, made him an object of importance to Louis.

In the hope of receiving assistance from him against the powers which had united at the celebrated League of Augsburg, for the singular purpose of checking the gigantic strides of his growing power, the French monarch sought to cement their friendship by forming an alliance between the Duke of Burgundy and the young princess, Mary of Savoy; and at this period frequent embassies passed between the two courts. In consequence of this communication, many who found Versailles gloomy under the restrictions

imposed by Madame de Maintenon, gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of exchanging that residence for the livelier amusements and softer climate of Turin; and amongst these was Madame de Saony, to whom the expectation of meeting her niece was an additional attraction. The young Marchioness had found there, all that was calculated to fascinate a mind in which the seeds of vanity had been most carefully sown. The elegance of her person and manners, aided by the concomitants of high rank and wealth, had made her the “cynosure of neighbouring eyes” in those circles of dissipation in which she too readily joined.

At the conclusion of a day, whose fervent heat excused the “*dolce far niente*” of the Italian’s existence, the beautiful Marchioness sat beneath the marble portico of the ducal palace; her dress of the darkest and richest hue, folded over, but not concealing, the exquisite shape of her ivory bosom,—its only ornament the light drapery of a white veil, which, falling amid the luxuriant tresses of her hair, softened its sable shade, and gave addi-

tional effect to the starry glances of the dark eyes, which shone beneath the fringed curtain of their lids and rested but with vacant gaze on the plumed cavalier, who was pouring fourth at her feet the passionate stanzas of a Venetian canzonet. Other groups enlivened that evening scene, and wandered among the stately pillars and costly statues, which were interspersed throughout the gardens; but none so numerous or so gay as that which thronged round Anima's seat. There, tarried the proudest courtiers, there, lingered the Duke, to swell the tide of adulation offered to her; and, in that heavenly clime, no chilly evening breeze drove them from contemplating the silvery queen of night,—the starlit poetry of the blue canopy above; but, enjoying all the luxury of the midnight air, they lounged away the glittering hours, till called by the voice of music, they exchanged those languishing delights for the gay fandango, or more measured dance. Thus night after night told Anima's existence, from which care seemed banished, except, that

at times, memory would depict a long past scene, and conscience plant a thorn; but both impressions were alike momentary, and both vanished in the brilliant present. Her husband was with her, but too much occupied by state affairs, and flattered by the private conferences to which the Duke invited him, to note much her mode of life; and the occasional flash of jealous indignation, which her dissipation called forth, was forgotten in more engrossing business. No friend, no monitor stood by, to raise the warning voice to the frail being that needed it so much; nor indeed till Madame de Saony arrived, was any person there, who could aspire to the privilege of companionship with the beautiful Marchioness.

It was at this moment that information arrived of a deputation from Geneva, demanding an audience of the court, on the subject of the late disturbances in Piedmont; and this excited an interest and curiosity which were increased by the report that the Swiss embassy was accompanied by some of the sufferers who

had escaped from those unhappy valleys. Numerous were the inquiries on all sides into every particular relating to them; and, unconscious of the pain they inflicted, the inquisitive throng too often pressed the subject on Anima's unwilling ear.

With a thousand false and exaggerated reports, came the story of the ejection of her earliest friends from their dearly-loved homes; and ashamed of owning kindred with a people she heard stigmatized as rebels and idiots, she listened with a beating heart, and an eye schooled to betray no inward emotion.

It surprised and hurt even Madame de Saony, to witness the seeming insensibility with which her niece heard the tale, she had expected would have wrung her inmost soul. But she did not follow her to the privacy of her own chamber, and there see the burst of agony in which the pent-up feelings found vent; nor did she notice how, under each careful concealment, the canker-worm was at work, feeding on the lustre of her eye, and banishing the damask from her cheek.

She knew not that Anima felt the change which had passed over her heart, and blushed, with the bitterness of shame, to think those friends were nigh, to whom she dared not show herself as the being they once gloried in. Her marriage, her apostacy, her whole existence now were unfit for them to know. Meanwhile, she learnt that many of the ladies of the court intended to be present at the morning assembly, before which the Vaudois were to appear; and, with a shudder of anguish, the reflection arose in her heart, that she was self-excluded from an interview which once would have been so dear to her; and she even dreaded lest any one, ignorant of her early connexions, should ask her to join them. In fear she sought the seclusion of her own apartment. But Madame de Saony, suspecting her distress, and fancying it might arise from a wish to behold again the friends of her childhood, followed her, and in mistaken kindness, offered to obtain for her a private meeting with the Pastor; but Anima started

at the bare proposal, and impatiently refused the proffered intervention.

Not to Madame de Saony, could she have disburdened herself of feelings she believed her incapable of appreciating; and too proud, to give way before her, to emotions which were irrepressible, she begged her to depart and leave her to the solitude and repose which her health required.

The aunt was obliged to retire, wondering at, and deceived by the repugnance to seeing her former friends, under which the Marchioness veiled her real sentiments.

When alone, burning drops fell from Anima's eyes, the anguish of a remorse, with which there were none to sympathize or to understand, at first overpowered her; but a milder feeling came at last, and softer tears coursed down her cheeks, as imagination called back the hours, the prayers of her youth.

Pure innocent enjoyments! Could the magnificence which surrounded the gay and brilliant

scene before her, make up for their loss? Alas! in that luxurious apartment, the envied and admired Marchioness di Pianezza shed tears, much more bitter to her than the sad Vaudois had wept, in their dreary Alpine path from the homes, the treasures they had lost!

A fresh mortification awaited Anima, in the entrance of her attendant Victorine, who came to solicit permission to visit the protestant deputies, unconscious of her mistress's early story; and having been withheld till now, by Madame de Maintenon's injunctions, from telling her own, it was not till an insurmountable desire to converse with and perhaps to hear the prayers of her peculiar worship, from the lips of those who shared her faith, overcame her scruples, that she ventured to disclose it. Now, however, she told the object of her request, her tale of injuries, and the patience and fidelity with which, in the face of them, she had maintained inviolate her adherence to the doctrines of her church. Then, with tears of anxiety, she asked as her most humble reward,

permission to visit the man whose sanctity had made him famous even among the followers of other creeds. How humbled, how lessened did Anima at this moment feel, and how willingly would she have changed places with the poor, defenceless, but still protestant girl, to whom she gave her unhesitating consent!

The Council-chamber that morning presented a most interesting scene; as well to the foreign deputies, to whose simple habits the customs of the Italian court were quite strange, as to the splendid assembly who received them in it.

The usual forms of etiquette having passed; the Duke listened from his throne, with profound attention to the address delivered by the Swiss ambassadors, in which they conjured his royal highness to attend to their petitions in behalf of the unhappy Vaudois, who, shut up in fort La Tour, where they had been decoyed by false promises on the part of Don Gabriel of Savoy, were languishing in captivity, and for whose sake they were willing to forego all the advantages of their

alliance, rather than be passive witnesses of the unjust treatment they received.

Firmly, but courteously, this address was worded; and when, in answer to its remonstrance, Victor Amadeus rose and exculpated his apparently harsh measures towards the Vaudois, by alleging that their heretic opinions, which sanctioned every crime, and their rebellious habits, forced him to adopt them; the ambassadors turned to Henri Arnaud as the champion of his people, and bade him defend their cause.

Amid a murmur, which showed how difficult was deemed such an attempt, the venerable pastor rose, and, with the impressive calmness of truth, addressed the Duke. He spoke respectfully, of the allegiance and fidelity his flock had ever maintained to the house of Savoy, and declared how they had preserved the purity of their Christian religion, without any mixture of human traditions, since first they had received the doctrines of the gospel from the apostles themselves; he showed how, even so early as the ninth century, the primitive simplicity of their faith was set

forth in the writings of Claude, bishop of Turin; while even their worst enemies, from the days of the first inquisitor, Reynerus Sacco, down to Claudis de Scissel, archbishop of Turin, in 1500, bore testimony to the innocence of their lives, and the strictness of their morals. He adduced in proof of the truth of that religion, the patience with which they had borne the extremity of suffering; the obedient resignation with which they had submitted to their oppressor's will; the uniform sanctity of their lives—fruits which sprung from its holy seed alone. He then drew an affecting picture of their grief, when the last severe edict which deprived them of the privilege of performing the rites of their church was issued; still more their consternation, when they were threatened with having their children torn from them, unless sacrificed to the baptism of a church, whose doctrines seemed unscriptural to them, and their subsequent anguish at the sad consequences which followed their resolute resistance to the unjust decree; the abject humility with which some obeyed his orders of immediate submission, and

the reward they received in the cruelty with which Don Gabriel punished their credulity by plunging them into the horrid dungeons of La Tour.

Then, with the vivid pencil of truth, he described the sufferings his own little band had endured when crossing, in all the rigour of winter, the mountain regions, and detailed the kindness with which at length they had been received by their protestant friends at Geneva. The eloquent speech concluded, by an earnest appeal to the mercy of their prince, to receive his subjects again into favour, to restore to them the dwellings from which they had been ejected, and which their forefathers' brave defence for centuries, had fully entitled them to possess. And when the old man ceased speaking, not an eye in that gay assembly refused their tribute of sympathy to the tale he had so simply and affectingly told. The prince himself was touched, and ended the debate with expressions of favour and kindness, which gave universal satisfaction;

but, too much on his guard to commit himself by any promise he might afterwards repent, he deferred till another day the important decision, which was to seal the fate of the unhappy Vaudois.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARIE Arnaud had not concealed from her father, De Grafenried's declaration of attachment ; and the pang which sometimes shot across her bosom, as she thought of the devoted affection she had so hastily flung from her, and the sorrow she had thereby inflicted where her warmest gratitude was due, was increased at beholding his evident regret. Unconscious, that she had a deeper motive for rejecting the suit than the objection to enter into any alliance while persecution hung over her people, Arnaud would fain have persuaded his daughter to consent to a proposition which would provide her with a powerful pro-

tector, when time in its closing limits, should exclude him from fulfilling the tender duties of paternal care, which even now, however dear to him, teemed with difficulties. It was fortunate for Marie, that the necessary arrangements for the expected interview with Victor Amadeus engrossed so much time, that there was no leisure for conversing on the theme from which she sensitively shrunk; and in the solitude of those hours of her father's absence, she indulged in the anticipation of moments when, once more restored to the home and friends of her youth, her most ardent wishes might be crowned, and perhaps even Anima's image effaced from the mind of the restored Durand.

Hope built the charming edifice which imagination loved to crown; and she only turned from the enchanting scene, when the vivid realities of the present forcibly claimed her attention: and then, if from her windows she saw the gay festas, or tinselled processions, which daily passed in honour of the religion of the country she was visiting, they had no charms for her. Shocked at their

difference from the customs in which she had been bred, she viewed them with the eye of disapprobation, and asked herself as she gazed,—“ Who were the people which surrounded her ? and what the religion they professed ? ”

Truth replied they were the oppressors of her country, the persecutors of her race, from whose blood and tears they had wrung the produce they were spending in luxury and dissipation ; while memory depicted the simple tenets and customs of her own church, and contrasted them with the symbols around her. She called to mind the pure doctrines of the pious Bishop Claude, and shuddered at the votive garlands, the images he had denounced as idolatrous, which passed her now in triumphal procession. She longed like him, to raise the voice of warning, and to bid them lay aside their fallacious dependance on their own works, and accept the gospel promises of unconditional forgiveness, of which he had so fearlessly preached.

Eight centuries indeed had passed, since the holy father had denounced the errors of popery,

but still his influence remained over every Vaudois' breast, and from infancy Marie had been taught to cherish and revere his memory. From these reflections she turned, with eager curiosity, to hear her father's account of what had passed on his return from the court, and with a heart beating high with hope she learnt his reception had been favourable, and his report had excited an evident sympathy in his hearers. Whilst thus engaged, they were interrupted, by the announcement of a female, requesting to speak with the pastor, and on her admission they beheld, though they knew it not, the attendant of their lost Anima. Victorine apologized for her intrusion, which she excused on the score of an irresistible impulse to see those, whose faith and fate had been so similar to her own; and Arnaud listened with compassion to her tale of the French Protestants' sufferings, and applauded the patience with which both she and they had submitted to their sad misfortunes. But Marie felt a yet stronger interest in her visiter, the link which unites two

sympathizing minds, where all without is strange and at variance with their best and fondest aspirations.

She gathered much, in their frequent subsequent meetings, of the state and opinions of the court, with regard to their peculiar affairs, and much of more private information of its modes and customs, of which she was wholly ignorant. Once in their conversation, the name of Madame de Saony was mentioned, and Marie immediately remembering her relationship to Anima, sought and obtained intelligence which she little expected.

Her marriage, her apostacy, her residence in Turin, were each in turn matter of fresh surprise and regret. The first, indeed, she could forgive, excusing it on the score of feelings, the warmth of which she only too well knew herself; but her change of faith, her light and dissipated life, still more her unaccountable coldness, in making no effort to see again the friends who were once so dear, and were now close at hand, shocked and wounded her, while it almost surpassed her belief. But when Victorine went on to relate how in

secret the Marchioness di Pianezza would bedew her couch with tears; how haunting regrets paled her cheek and dimmed its beauty, a feeling of pity rose in her breast, and she resolved to spare her father the sorrowful news of Anima's fall, and trusted, with the hope peculiar to her own confiding nature, that sparks of a better fire yet smouldered in the bosom of her friend, and might be roused into existence. But while Marie, in solitary silence, was musing over these things, reports had reached the palace, of the beautiful companion Arnaud had brought with him to Turin; and with the curiosity incidental to her sex, sharpened too in this instance by the individual interest existing between the strangers and her niece, Madame de Saony earnestly desired to see them in private, though withheld by the difficulty of arranging a visit which, on one hand might be intrusive to Mademoiselle Arnaud, on the other obnoxious to the Duke. Determined, however, to gratify her wishes, and aware of the power of youth and beauty over Victor Amadeus, she took an early opportunity to descant on the personal merits, and the heroic

conduct of the daughter of the aged pastor; and she succeeded in exciting in him a desire to lift the veil of mystery in which the stranger chose to seclude herself. With the curiosity of Madame de Saony, was mingled a spirit of romance, which moved her to aid, if possible, the cause which she had heard so touchingly pleaded by the pastor of the Alps; and though she did not dare to intrude the subject on her princely relative, who banished all political discussions from the gay circle of his court, she flattered herself that a young and enthusiastic advocate would have more chance of success, in one hour's private interview, than the wisest and most eloquent statesman in the most prolix debate.

With a woman's tact, she contrived to mould the Duke's inclinations to her will; and then directed them to the desired meeting. Aware that the strictest secrecy was necessary, in taking a step, which if known would be liable to the most serious interpretations, he determined to maintain a close incognito.

Accompanied by Madame de Saony, whose

imaginary brother he personated,' they assumed a false name, and announced themselves to the Arnauds as foreigners of high rank staying at the ducal palace.

It was on the evening of the day in which Marie had made the discovery of Anima's desertion, that the father and daughter awaited the arrival of their unknown visitors; and indulged in the vain hope, that Anima herself might be the person who so earnestly requested an interview, and yet feared to send her name, lest the tale of her apostacy should have reached their ears, and they should refuse to acknowledge her again. With such expectations, it was a disappointment to see two entire strangers enter, which made Marie wish she had refused to be present, and she steeled herself against the winning softness of the lady's manner, and the respectful but evident admiration of her companion. Yet, when the stranger said that the sympathy in their cause, which the pastor's speech had excited the day before, had led her to visit those who had suffered so accutely, and when she expressed her hope

for their success, Marie felt grateful for the kindness of her visiter, and her frankness of manner returning, she forgot her usual caution, and entered into conversation. She told the tale of all their sorrows; and as her auditors gazed on her and observed the tear that trembled in her eye, or the simplicity with which she related deeds of courage, which would have exalted other women into heroines for a crowd to gaze on, they felt how far more impressively the recital fell from her lips than even from the father's on the preceding day. Even the iron policy of Victor, melted before the eloquent language of that deep blue eye, and of the evanescent blush that mantled on her cheek. She turned to the stranger's supposed brother, and added in softened accents, "Yet, if the heart of Victor, could be open to his subjects' woes, if unsurrounded by the hollow advice of courtiers, and the wily intrigues of foreign statesmen, he would listen to the heartfelt vows of their allegiance and hear their agonized groans, he would protect his people—he would, he must protect, and strike off the bonds of their captivity.

“ He who lives in the midst of luxury and festivity; who knows not the pang of hunger, nor the sigh for the free air—his Creator’s unlimited gift; he who who has never experienced the misery of sickness unattended, unrelieved by the inereast necessities, say, would he dare to condemn a nation to such sufferings, and not tremble before the Almighty Being, who seeth in secret, and whose mysterious presence no mortal can escape?

“ Has Victor no respect for his word as a knight and a gentleman? Has he no child—no wife—no sister, whose honour is dear to him, that he should forget how a husband—a brother—a father, can feel, when he beholds those dearest objects of affection torn from his arms, and can only pray that theirs may be the lesser evils which a damp dark dungeon threatens? Oh Victor! had you but seen, as I have, the scanty remnant of a people whose only crime was their devotion and their faith, expelled from their homes, to wander in strange lands, exposed to the soldiers’ violence and the murderer’s ruthless grasp; had you beheld the helpless infant, and the shrieking mother,

subjected to horrors such as you have never even imagined, the tear of compassion must have been wrung from your heart!

“Strangers!” resumed Marie, after a pause, “ye who witness my grief, say, are yours the only hearts, in this court of luxury, which beat with sympathy for our unhappy case; does no kind friend plead in our favour at Victor’s throne, and is there no hope that he will grant our prayer and release our sad brethren?”

“Yes,” said the stranger, “there is hope; fear not, Mademoiselle Arnaud, you have a powerful mediator with Victor, but you wrong him,” he added, more earnestly; “you are unjust to his character; the deceptions practised against the captives in La Tour, the persecution which your valleys have endured, come not from him alone, but from the court of France, whose prince is a bigot, and a man of sin!”

“Ah, stranger, you may endeavour to exculpate the Duke, but in vain. Can a generous mind sacrifice his principles to base fear? Could he, if possessed of one particle of rectitude, of mercy,

have sacrificed a nation who obeyed and loved him, to a prince whose power he dreaded? True honour, true religion, acknowledges not such votaries. Victor is now no longer deceived; the tale of our wrongs has reached his ears; and if he hesitates to do us justice, their voice will cry aloud to that Heaven, where the policy of princes is no excuse, and where worldly success weighs not in the scale of justice! Unless ample and speedy restitution of our rights is made, harder, bitterer, will be his fate hereafter, than ours even has been here!"

The stranger sighed; and again sought to defend the character of Victor Amadeus; described the power of France, and attempted to justify his conduct by the rebellious disobedience of her people, whose open violation of his laws demanded punishment.

"Alas!" said Marie, "what was their disobedience? They paid to his emissaries the tribute of their possessions, wrung from their ungenerous soil, the scanty support which barely sufficed to their own necessities, nor grudged that tax to their prince;

but when he demanded more than their life, more than their blood, when he asked for the souls of their precious little ones, their hearts revolted, and they refused to acknowledge the right of princes over what belongs to God! Then rose their determination to protect their children; and their reward was imprisonment and death.

“ Unhappy stranger, you know not what you attempt when you defend such awful iniquity as this!”

No lighter subjects were broached in a conversation so engrossing to each party, except indeed, when, touched by the loneliness of Mademoiselle Arnaud's situation, the stranger lady marvelled at her strict and voluntary seclusion.

“ Madame,” replied Marie, “ in a strange land, the Vaudois must keep in silence, must pray in solitude against the temptations of its new customs. Our faith frowns on the levity which characterizes other worship; and the near view we take of its sanctity, unfits us for lighter considerations.”

“But surely, Mademoiselle,” observed the stranger, “the Almighty requires not so complete a sacrifice of the feelings natural to youth, excludes not the cheerfulness of innocent gaiety, forbids not happiness.”

“Happiness, Madame,” replied Marie, “forbids it! Ah no, religion elevates and purifies happiness from earthly dross; and if it raises us above this world’s desires, it is to open the delights of Heaven! How shall the mind that contemplates the ineffable love of its Creator, the brightness of his glory, the majesty of his power, bear to turn to the pomp and magnificence of earthly splendour, or take interest in the petty objects wherein a meaner contemplation centres its interests? Religion refines the source of our joys; and the devout mind opens more easily to the blessings of social intercourse, the tender sympathy of affection, which absorbs the remembrance of self in the love of our fellow-creatures. No, Madame, that religion is not harsh, nor exclusive of enjoyment, which opens to our hearts a stream of love, and fits our

minds to appreciate the wonders of this glorious creation, the ever-living witness of the power and the benevolence of Him who called it into existence. What has the world left in such a comparison?—dull, cold, insensible if you will, its pleasures unsatisfying, its hopes unreal. Who that has known its feverish excitement, and can compare it with the soul-stirring delights of religion, would halt one moment between the two? The pleasures of the one,” continued Marie, “are, it is true, unknown to me; but their delusive temptations have been described, and I would not that they should pollute that temple of my soul, which I have consecrated to holier purposes.”

“No, my Marie,” exclaimed her father, “you are right, the gaieties of Turin are not for you, who, nursed amidst the sublimest works of God, art yet of purer eyes than to behold the iniquities of men; and may He who thus made, preserve thee from the world.”

The visitors at length prepared to depart. On taking leave, Victor requested Marie’s acceptance

of a ring, not only to be valued in remembrance of that interview, but as a pledge, which in any hour of exigency might redeem the assistance of one, who though unknown to her, was not uninfluential at the court of Savoy. Nor on such terms could she refuse the proffered gift, but gratefully receiving it, fastened it round her neck with a dear memorial she never laid aside,—her mother's hair! The Duke was deeply affected. Unconscious whom she was addressing, Marie had fearlessly depicted his conduct in its true light, and unveiled its secret springs; and the remorse she had awakened was more poignantly felt as he dwelt on her perfections; she was so different to any of her sex that he had ever seen, so unconscious of her merit, so powerful and deep in her feeling, and yet so gentle and retiring, that her image dwelt on his mind; and when the beauties who thronged his court again met his eyes that evening, they seemed to have lost half of their charms, and ere he slept, a softer feeling of kindness, a desire even to pardon her countrymen, stole over his stern and self-seeking heart.

But with the morning, alas! came the arguments of councillors, from whose hearts, state expediency had banished pity, and despatches from Louis, relating the advance of his enemies; while in the tone of entreaty, wherewith he so well knew how to veil his commands, he asked permission to fill those valleys, from which his cousin had so wisely expelled the heretics, with his own troops.

By this stratagem Louis would gain the key to the territories of Victor Amadeus, and obtain a hold over him which would prevent all chance of his withholding the assistance he might want in the approaching struggle. He was also well aware he had little cause to expect any refusal at a moment, when hostile powers hovering round Savoy, the protection and friendship of his powerful ally rose in value in the eyes of its prince.

With such weighty reasons in the scale against the restoration of the protestant valleys, the cause of the Vaudois became light as air; and really touched by the account of their sufferings, though anxious to maintain his friendship with

the Swiss, Victor Amadeus dared not grant more than half their petition, namely the release of the captives from La Tour, and permission for them to pass unmolested through his dominions, giving the ambassadors at the same time hopes, but no promise of a future entire restitution of their rights. With this inconclusive declaration the deputies were obliged to appear satisfied; for the amicable expressions of the Duke towards their nation, the favourable language to the Vaudois in which it was couched, left no excuse for further remonstrance.

Furnished with written documents to ensure their brethren's immediate release, and promises of ample forgiveness to all at a future period, Arnaud and his daughter, once more set out on their journey with the Swiss ambassadors to Geneva, there impatiently to await the arrival of their countrymen.

CHAPTER XV.

WE must now return to the period which preceded the flight of Arnaud and his flock to Geneva, when Durand had left Angrogna to endeavour to encourage the inhabitants of Lucerne to resist the forces of Don Gabriel of Savoy, then pressing on those valleys, while other troops under Catinat forced those of Peyrouse and St. Martin.

He found that some preparations for defence had been made ; the valleys were fortified with intrenchments of turf and stone, and the inhabitants, to the number of two thousand, were already in array.

No strangers were among this corps ; but under

the direction of the elder and most considerable of their countrymen, they awaited the enemy with a resolution which with military discipline and under able commanders might have been effective; but these were wanting, and the hours which intervened between the completion of their preparations and the arrival of the shock, gave a fatal opportunity for hesitation and doubt, productive of sad effects in their councils.

When Durand arrived, disunion had crept in, and jealousy divided the bonds which necessity should have united. One head, one chief was wanted to organize the whole. He saw and felt the important deficiency: but it was too late to remedy it, and with deep anxiety he awaited the approaching crisis.

It came. The army of Don Gabriel, swelled with the well-mounted and disciplined militia of Mondovi, Barges, and Bagnol, poured into the plain of St. John, their glittering equipments forming a striking contrast to the ill-organized and scantily-clothed band they came to expel.

But the Vaudois had to fight for liberty and

life, and with a determined courage which required but judicious management to ensure success, they collected their forces to meet the shock in the open plain, instead of defending their more sheltered passes.

The army of the Duke at once opened a terrific battery upon them, which they were wholly unprepared to return, being quite unused to such a mode of warfare. For a moment, however, they stood firm, and then Durand, perceiving the uselessness of remaining exposed to such certain destruction without the means of striking one blow in self-defence, cried out, "To the heights, to the heights;" and led them to some intrenchments higher up, which would afford some shelter from the enemy's fire.

From this post they beheld the troops of Don Gabriel advance at full speed, burning every dwelling they passed.

The air was dense with the smoke of the cannon, the horizon red with the glare of the flames bursting from their homes; but moved to desperation by the sight, the Vaudois kept their ground

with undaunted firmness and, closing their ranks, presented an unbroken front to the enemy under a dreadful cannonade.

For eight hours they maintained their post, when their ammunition began to fail, and their overtaxed strength to give way.

Durand felt that the only hope of repairing the imprudence of their first disposition, was to retreat to the fort of St. John, about two hundred paces distant, and urged them to adopt this measure.

Slowly, and in solid order they then retreated, discharging their rifles as they went, with fatal precision at the foe ; and succeeded in gaining the fort, having lost only five of their number.

Here, they awaited the enemy's attack with renewed hopes, the excitement of the moment filling each heart with enthusiasm, while the roll of the musketry, and the shouts of the assailants, seemed to stimulate rather than depress their courage.

The enemy, now within reach of the fort, opened a raking fire upon it; but the besieged, still undaunted were preparing to make a sudden onset, when a ball struck their leader, and a confusion

ensued during which the advantageous moment passed away.

For a while, Durand remained insensible where he fell; but though severely, he was not fatally wounded, and he soon rose again shouting, "On Vaudois, on! Quit yourselves like men, and the day is ours!" But in the interval of inaction which elapsed, fatal tidings had been brought by some stragglers to the fort, and his entreaties were answered by the cry of "All is over! St. Martin and Peyrouse have yielded to the French!"

A dreadful consternation prevailed at these words, and the panic increased even as the foe advanced; for the Lucernois remembered that from these valleys a descent bore down on the gorges of their own, through which the French, elated with victory and eager to revenge the momentary check which their allies had received, might pour with irresistible fury.

The intelligence flew from mouth to mouth, in the yet defended fort, gaining fresh horrors at every recital.

In despair, the weapons of defence were laid

aside, the trembling soldiers deserted their post, and their chiefs assembled to ponder over the speediest mode of conveying proposals of treaty to Don Gabriel, to secure conditions of mercy, ere the arrival of fresh support to him should render their position more critical.

Durand entreated them to tarry and make another effort to defend themselves ere they yielded; but in vain. They were deaf to his remonstrances, angry at his expostulations; and insisted on despatching messengers, with such offers of capitulation as could be hurriedly framed in the hour of terror. Then succeeded moments of anguish, whose bitterness uncertain spirits only know; and unavailing regrets at having acted on the mere impulse, alternated with the wild hope that lit up the deeper gloom, as reason bade them now expect the worst.

In silence, or with broken inarticulate sentences, the chiefs were collected in that fortress where, an hour before, the excitement of success had silenced doubt and painted a brilliant future. Sometimes, the clamour of dispute testified the

conflicting opinions that were entertained, and gave fresh poignancy to those moments of suspense, reminding them, that on their deliberations hung the lives and liberties of those whom it was their duty to defend, and whose ancestors had never stained their rectitude by the abnegation of their rights.

And Durand!—he, who best knew, most dreaded the character of the foe they had to deal with; he, who had left all dearest and nearest to him in the hour of danger, to assist and support the men who had refused his counsel, and with whose fate his own was now irrevocably linked,—what were his feelings?

None knew; for, impenetrable in its expression, his face was turned towards the window which commanded a view of the glorious orb, now slowly sinking, amid gorgeous masses of fiery clouds, in the lead-coloured horizon beneath; and the attention he bestowed upon it was apparently undisturbed by the confusion around him.

At length the messengers returned, and with

fearful anticipations, the council prepared to unfold the packet on which depended their own, their wives', and their children's fate!

Short as was the moment which elapsed ere the seal and enclosures of Don Gabriel's despatch could be opened, it seemed to linger on the hearts of the expectant number gathered there, until the elder of the party with a faltering voice read the following words:

“ Inhabitants of Lucerne, lay down your arms, and throw yourselves on the clemency of his Royal Highness Don Gabriel of Savoy; and be assured that he will extend his favours and personal protection to yourselves, your wives, and little ones.”

He ceased, and the acclamations which declared how unexpected was the gracious answer, rose unmingled with doubt or fear, and it was with a look of triumph that the councillors turned to Durand, as if to deprecate the opinion he had given. Here were promises of pardon, offers of mercy, on conditions none dreamt of refusing, and a second shout showed how im-

plicitly the Vaudois trusted in the faith of their prince.

Durand looked up, met their joyous look, and heard the exulting sounds with a serious, mournful expression. The assent so unhesitatingly given showed how vain would be any attempt to cast the least doubt on offers, the veracity of which he had after all no right to asperse; but it was with a cold shudder of dread, a suspicion new to his nature, that he prepared to accompany the Lucernois to fulfil the ceremonies of submission, at best, degrading in his eyes; he had joined them, however, for high and noble purposes, and his fate, now irretrievably linked with theirs, he resolved to meet unshrinkingly.

From the windows of fort St. John, they beheld the Savoyard troops slowly marching up the valley. Banners waved in the air, bright pennons on the breeze, while triumphant music ushered the conquerors of Lucerne into its peaceful hamlets.

Voluntarily, undoubtingly, its rightful possessors knelt, unarmed and unprotected, in meek sub-

mission at the feet of their prince, to renew oaths of allegiance to their sovereign which but for him had never been broken, and vow away all claims to every thing but his forgiveness and support. No false homage, no transitory submission was this. The people of the valleys called on God to witness their oaths, and their religion forbade their asking his inspection of promises they did not intend to fulfil.

It was an affecting, heart-rending sight—that devoted band, whose courage neither shot nor steel had quelled, kneeling in humility before the offers of mercy! And he, who accepted these vows! was humanity stifled in his breast? Had his Maker's image departed thence? that he could listen unmoved, and still maintain his plan of deep-laid treachery to entrap these helpless victims into the horrors of captivity or agonizing death?

Alas, for human nature! Alas, for the historian whom truth compels to record the disgraceful fact! Durand had rightly judged the duplicity of Don Gabriel, and the last vows of the Lucernois, were the signal for their despair!

Graciously Don Gabriel smiled, as surrounded by his military followers, he stood before the Lucernois to receive their tendered allegiance. But the withering sneer of the countenance of the Evil One, when he beheld our first parents undone by his treacherous wiles, could best compare with that which distorted his countenance, as a lurid gleam from the thatched cottages around, and a wild shriek of agony from the now surrounded band, told how he respected the faith of nations, and how he regarded the moral principle within!

Then began the ruthless violence of the licensed massacre, then sounded the shrieks of outraged women, the deep groan of powerless and organized manhood, the loud prayer to Heaven, the imprecation on man—but in vain; the tyrant's hand was raised, nor tarried in its ruthless violence till the morning light revealed the razed villages, the desecrated hearths, and the mutilated remains of those who were the possessors.

All night raged the oppressor's cruelty, and the soldier's thirst for blood; and rapine, murder,

and blasphemy, polluted the atmosphere, over which the blue vault of heaven still stretched in undisturbed tranquillity.

Most of those who could have called that district, now so wantonly devastated, their own, had fallen victims; and happier than their companions, had experienced in that brief night, the alternations of hope and anguish, and then the rest of death. A more wretched remnant remained, burdened with an existence that only held out to them a lengthened prospect of torture to end in a captivity, the horror of which far exceeded that of the most agonizing death.

A short distance from the plain of St. John, and the fort we have seen so valiantly defended and suddenly deserted, is a valley enriched by cloud-capped mountains, where the river Pelice, tumultuous and rapid, rushes over peaked and rugged rocks, its waters deriving a darker hue from the shadow of the steep banks which rise in jagged points amidst the sparkling foam of the waves. The icy peaks of the heights above reached with the sky, and deriving a thousand

varying tints from every changing cloud, are reflected in stronger hues in its waters.

Few trees diversify the scene; but amid their parted shade the turrets of a Fortress are discernible, which belonged in ancient days to a family of note, who, while they fortified it with all the necessary care of feudal times, had also embellished it with the pomp of an age when castles were few, and their possessors, lords over the land. Baronial halls; suites of gloomy galleries, the size of which was calculated for times when families consisted not only of the main stem, but of the adherent branches and their numerous retainers; dark subterranean passages which led to dungeons of which the secret depths were a source of sorrow to the good and terror to the bad, characterized the castle of St. Jean de la Tour; which, long deserted by its rightful owners, had fallen into decay and become invested by those tales of the marvellous, which rendered its gray walls and indistinct turrets an unwelcome sight to the home-returning peasant.

Perhaps, indeed, could those walls have re-

vealed all that had passed between them—have imbodyed the deep-breathed sigh of many a solitary captive, their history would have been more terrific than the fictitious legends, which the credulous inhabitants of the vicinity trembled and wept to hear; for there, had many of their unbending forefathers expiated their firm adherence to their faith by long years of captivity, under former persecutions of the tyrannic house of Savoy. But years had now elapsed since Fort la Tour, had been used in any way, and its empty dungeons only waited for fresh inmates.

These were damp, dark, and subterranean; the bat and the owl, with every creeping reptile that shuns the light of day, had had undisturbed possession, unmindful of the mephitic air, whose poisonous effluvia no other creature could brook.

The court of Savoy had, however, destined fresh inhabitants for them, and they were to be crowded, as well as every other prison in the valleys, with the Vaudois who had refused to abandon their abodes and their faith.

Preceded by a file of troops, and fastened together by ropes, the remnant who survived the horrors of the night of St. John, were driven rather than conducted through the defile which led to the castle. The ribald jest, the blasphemous imprecation, and too often the clash of many a sabre stroke, as the victims were hurried along with a precipitation which caused many to lose their footing and roll over the steep ravine which bordered the narrow path, resounded through the mountains, and told that the plan of treachery was now about to be consummated by the incarceration of the miserable wretches whom the soldiers forced along at the bayonet's point.

They reached those iron doors; back flew, with creaking sound, the ponderous hinges, and the Vaudois turned to look their last, on the glorious sky, the impressive scenery of their own dear country. They left liberty, home, and all that makes life dear, the mangled remains of their relations still precious in death; but no merciful pause was allowed, in which they might raise their eyes above, and bid one heart-wrung

farewell to the scenes which, henceforth, memory alone would restore. Huddled together, thrust into those dark chambers of misery, the Vaudois entered Fort la Tour, and knew, as they heard the grating bolt and bar exclude them from light and air, and all that gilds existence, that their fate was sealed for ever in this world.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the misery which followed, and to relate the shrieks of despair, the gnashing of teeth in which the agony of the deluded Vaudois found vent; and yet it were a light task compared to that which would await the historian who should recite the horrors of the captivity which ensued. The invention of fiends, the fury of wild beasts in the fulfilment of the mad impulse of their passions, could alone portray the savage cruelty with which Victor persecuted his unhappy subjects.

Not only in the prison of La Tour were such enormities perpetrated, but in that of Mirabouc, Lucerne, and Vachère. Only the most disgusting food relieved the necessities of hunger; and physical privation caused lingering and dreadful

diseases which, ending in death, produced fresh pestilence from the mass of unburied bodies which infected the air.

There the faint cry of agony, which severed the soul from its tenement, was mingled with the new born infant's mournful wail; and the mother's shriek of anguish was imbittered by the reflection that the child, whose existence under any other circumstances would have banished the remembrance of suffering from her breast, had wakened to sorrows more tremendous than her own. Even the ties of domestic love were unbound by suffering, and the heart was hardened by the extremity of its woe. Death—the cry for death, resounded through those vaults, and had no terrors which could compare with those it would release them from. But yet the Vaudois lay not down “*to curse God and die.*” To the last, an enthusiastic belief, that a remnant would be saved, to accomplish the prophecy of Scripture, which it was part of their tenets to suppose related to them, triumphed over famine, sickness, and pain.

Though ignorant of the fate of most of their brethren, they knew from the fresh captives occasionally brought to their dungeon, that all had not perished, but that some, refusing to lay down their arms, had succeeded in their concealment; and they felt convinced, that the same constancy, which had been so nobly proved in the moment of danger, would also lead them to remember their brethren in need, and devise some stratagem for their rescue. But these were mere unsupported visions, that cheered those hours of misery in which even the little comfort they might have derived from mutual support was denied them, their guards separating in wanton cruelty, parents from children, and husband from wife, to add the fresh poignancy of suspense to their sufferings.

Still were they not mistaken in their trust in Him, whom in better moments they recognised as the author of their sore dispensations; and the prayer of faith was heard rising triumphant from those lacerated hearts, that a deliverer might be raised for them; and while every ray of earthly

hope seemed closed, their pastor had actually conquered greater difficulties than they had imagined, and effected that remonstrance at the court of Savoy, which was to bring them rescue from their woes.

Of 14,000 Vaudois inhabiting the valleys, at the beginning of the persecution, but only 3000 now remained to receive, in their prison, the edict of the Duke of Savoy, which restored them to liberty. That edict had been granted to the intercessions of the Swiss, and the representations of Henri Arnaud; and after an incarceration of two years, the prison gates were thrown open, and their wretched inmates restored once more to liberty, cast for pity on a wide world, where they could no longer claim a country or a home.

In the depth of winter, when the rigours of the climate rendered the attempt nearly impossible, the miserable band of captives, weakened by disease, and wanting every necessary of life, were driven from the prisons which, at such a season afforded almost a desirable shelter, to throw themselves on the mercy of the elements, in search of

some more hospitable land where they might lie down and die.

At five o'clock in the morning, with scarcely sufficient clothing to serve the purposes of decency, the prisoners of Mondovi prepared for their fearful journey, and were followed by those of the other dungeons. Parties of men, women, and children, worn with disease and gaunt with hunger, trod those snow-capped mountains, where many sunk down unable to make one further effort in self-defence. The mother left her infant's corpse, to stagger forwards but a few paces more, ere she too expired: there, friend left friend for ever on his icy couch, and the child saw the parent droop, nor could tarry to receive his latest sigh. Their bones long whitened those plains, in awful appeal to the God of justice and mercy; and in after years, their path might be traced by the skeletons, which remained to mark the spot where persecution had doomed innocence to death. Still they struggled on, divinely supported; and though numbers died on that forced and almost

miraculous march, some survived its horrors, headed by Durand, whose patient fortitude had won the respect of all, and they reached Geneva in the first months of the year 1689.

With many, strength endured but till then; and sinking ere they entered the city, its environs were strewed with their prostrate bodies. The energy, which had supported them through misery in its most fearful form, failed at the return of joy; and liberty brought death to them!

Then, came a meeting no pen can describe, when the more fortunate brethren who had escaped from Angrogna hastened to greet the partners of their creed, the friends they had longed to embrace, or to hear the confirmation of their fears in the history of their end.

They came forth to receive in their arms a famished and miserable crew, shadows of their former selves, whose appearance told a tale no words were needed to confirm. But one there was outsped the rest, whose eager gaze and outstretched arms, showed how dear was the object of her search;

and it was with a scream of thanksgiving, a look of delight, that revealed all that at another time her woman's heart had died rather than confess, that Marie Arnaud pressed to her bosom the sinking and exhausted frame of Walter Durand.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was in the spring of 1687, that all which remained of the once happy nation, who peopled the valleys of Piedmont, arrived to throw themselves on the protection of their protestant brethren in Geneva, and nobly did these exercise the duties of generosity and benevolence to the unfortunate claimants on their compassion.

We have seen how kindly they received the party, who sought their capital under Arnaud, how nobly they advocated their cause at the court of Savoy, and at length cordially welcomed the sufferers, whose restoration to liberty was their work. Ungrudgingly did they extend their hospitality

and offer the homeless wanderers an asylum in the villages of Berne, where they tried to soothe by tender sympathy the bitter remembrance of the past; but neither the blessings of liberty nor affection could chase from the hearts of the Vaudois the memory of home, and they pined with a yearning, peculiar to their country, for the land which gave them birth, and nourished the ardent hope of returning there, by dwelling on those passages of Scripture which they interpreted as relating to themselves, and pointing out their church, as that "true one" which "should be saved."

With an enthusiasm thus supported, they dwelt on the idea of repossessing their rightful homes, and revolved in their minds every stratagem by which it might be effected. Spies were sent out in disguise to reconnoitre the routes, and three times did they concert plans for the fulfilment of their desire which were rendered vain. Through want of caution, their deliberations became known to the envoys of Savoy, and to frustrate any attempt on the valleys, Victor Amadeus surrounded

the neighbourhood of St. Julien, Tremblières, Larcy, and Belle Vue, with guards reinforced by fresh troops under the Count de Bernex and the Marquis de Caudrées; while indignant at the presumption of his persecuted subjects, and irritated by the contrast the noble conduct of the Genevese presented to his own, he vehemently accused these of want of faith to himself in secretly encouraging rebellion against his laws.

These unjust imputations roused the anger of the Genevese. They felt they had in no degree infringed on the fidelity they owed their allies, by obeying the dictates of benevolence to their unhappy dependants; but anxious to prove their honesty, and fearful of the consequences of Victor's wrath, they began to doubt the policy of still extending the hand of brotherhood to the Vaudois. Added to this, they perceived that in the feelings of the latter, the love of their country outweighed the claims of gratitude, and threatened to weaken their promises of remaining inactive.

Seeds of suspicion thus sown, grew till dis-

union was produced ; and after a period, the council of Geneva came to a resolution to declare to the Vaudois, that reasons of state forced them to withdraw the protection they had extended, since the former had forfeited it by their efforts to break through the conditions of restored liberty.

They also announced to them that they must find another asylum, where, by a more cheerful compliance to the enforced commands of their prince, they would ensure the continued support of new friends, whom they recommended them to seek in the dominions of Brandenburg, whither they were strongly urged to emigrate without loss of time.

It was not till after much debate that the council adopted this determination, nor without strenuous opposition on the part of the two de Grafenrieds. The elder, indeed, uninfluenced by the strong passion, which still inspired his nephew, although he advocated the Vaudois cause, and enlarged on the claims of a defenceless people on their generosity, was

not insensible to the impolicy of harbouring guests so distasteful to the powers which surrounded his country; and he laboured to restrain the impetuosity of his nephew, who vainly exerted that influence in their behalf which till now had never failed.

The council remained firm in its decision; and it was the painful office of the Syndic de Grafenried to convey the intelligence to Arnaud and his daughter; and at the same time he announced, that he no longer dared to offer his own roof as an asylum, to which they had been so hospitably welcomed.

With astonishment, not unmingled with a sense of injury, the father and daughter listened to his communication; and then Arnaud replied with dignity—

“Most nobly, generous Syndic, you received us in our adversity, nor can we suffer the present reverse to cancel the debt of former obligation; but ill indeed, would it become us to desire to remain unwelcome burdens, on a hospitality we have no right but that of christian fellowship to claim.

“ We will depart, I and my flock; nor need we fear because our confidence in man has been misplaced, that God will desert us in the hour of need. This night we leave your roof; the world indeed is before us, and Providence above! He will conduct our wandering footsteps to some place of safety; meantime, accept our gratitude for past favours, and in after years we never can forget the memory of your benefits!”

The Syndic listened without answering.

Not thus suddenly, had he contemplated the close of their connexion; not thus did he dream of dismissing them without some substantial token of regard. At length, he strove to sooth the spirits he had involuntarily wounded: he spoke of sympathy, and offered assistance, but both were declined, and he remained hesitating between duty and inclination.

It was thus, that Ernest de Grafenried found the party, and suspecting the cause of their constraint, he vehemently addressed his uncle.

“ Nay! sir, not thus should the voice of cold policy dictate to the hearts of Switzers, and stain

the 'scutcheon of our noble house with the imputation of caprice or cowardice. Leave such things to recreant Savoyard lords. This is their home! the home consecrated to them by friendship, to which Providence first led them in the hour of sorrow; and shall it be said that princes had the power to violate such a sanctuary?

"Forbid it Heaven!—Arnaud," he added, turning with an air of almost devotional respect to the pastor, "consent to share with me my house in Berne, and I will defend to the last the rights and liberty of one so revered; thankful for the privilege, and proud to prove my worthiness of it. Come with me; and you will find, that my friends may disown me, my enemies oppress me, but the heart that beats, and the hand that bleeds in the Vaudois cause will more than repay me for any loss! Marie," he continued, casting himself at her feet, "turn not coldly away, give me a right to fight for thy people and thyself, and thus strengthened, this arm will do its devoir as did my ancestors at Sempach against a nobler foe."

"Rise," interrupted the pastor, deeply affected;

“yet, must not the cause of religion be pleaded thus, nor any earthly passion be blended with the motives of its defenders. No! the time is not yet ripe to wield the sword. Suffer us to depart. It were better thus, and we will bear to other lands, a hope which shall not be disappointed. That hand, noble count, for which thou hast so generously sued, must not be bartered in the hour of adversity, even for all thou hast to offer; but God send that it may, in happier hours, be the guerdon of thy devoted love.”

But Ernest would not thus be silenced; and, turning to Marie, once more implored an answer to his suit.

Falteringly she whispered, “Not now—oh, press me not now on such a subject! My thanks, my veneration, all I have to offer, except the return you ask, is thine; nor deem it ingratitude that I refuse what it would be sin in me to give!”

She withdrew the hand he had clasped in his, nor trusting herself to utter one more word, left the apartment confused and terrified at the words which impulsively had burst from her lips. A

figure met her as she passed—It was Durand. He too had learnt the ultimate decision of the council, and burning with indignation, was ready to accuse the Swiss of the basest inconsistency. Unmindful of Marie's agitation, or attributing it to the same cause as his own, he now detained her to tell all he had witnessed, all he had heard, and to extol the Count's strenuous exertion in their cause, and then added : " Ah Marie ! must the disinterested affection that prompts the noble self-sacrifice with which he contemns the loss of friends and every worldly advantage for our sakes, go unrequited ? nay,—turn not away, Marie ; De Grafenried's suit is no secret to me, your earliest friend ; nor is it an undue exercise of such a privilege on my part, to plead the cause of one, to whom our country already owes so much, and may yet owe much more."

But Marie broke from him, unable to endure these words, and covering her face, gave vent in the privacy of her apartment to the feelings which crushed her heart.

Meanwhile, Arnaud convoked the members of his flock, who with surprise and affliction had received the tidings, that they were anew deprived of a resting place; and consulted with them on the expediency of following the plan recommended by the Swiss.

With one accord they refused to seek a country, whose language was unknown, whose people were strangers, and whose distance was so great from their own valleys. In vain did the Genevese, indignant at the obstinate rejection of their advice, order them to depart. They asked but a corner of ground in which to lie down and die, and were refused!

The Vaudois, however, were not of a race to remain inactive or in despair. Their enthusiasm excited in them the conviction, that they were reserved for a greater end, and with rising energy they sent deputies to the reigning prince of Wirtemberg, to relate their misery and to solicit that support they had vainly depended on receiving in the canton of Berne. Their request was granted, but attended by the hard condition that they

should separate into small bodies, and not again congregate.

Situated as they were, these offers were equivalent to a rejection of their suit; and at once, giving up all hopes of resting there, they resolved to implore permission of the inhabitants of Zurich and Schaffhausen, to abide amongst them. Their petitions were aided by the arguments of the Bernois, who had been much affected at the recital of their woes, and were moved by the exhortations of their Banneret, to sympathize in their misery. Their representations aroused the compassion of the English and Dutch, and large sums were forwarded to alleviate their sufferings.

Poverty, therefore, did not add its sting to their misfortunes; but a home, a country was denied to them, except where their habits and dispositions, rendered their colonization well nigh impossible.

Their refusal was stigmatized as waywardness and ingratitude; no allowance being made for a people who could only enlist compassion for their advocate; and they were denounced as objects for anger, rather than relief. Oppressed by their

enemies, deserted by former friends, they were at length driven to disperse themselves on the frontiers of Wirtemberg, and in the depopulated parts of the Palatinate, which Prince William of Neuburg wanted to recolonize. Here, for a moment, they found rest: and the Vaudois were pronounced by their inconstant friends to be once more settled. They were, however, still unsatisfied. They yearned for their native valleys, and refused to recognise any abiding place, but the one they fancied their Creator had assigned to them; and in the restlessness of an anxiety which taught them to seek out extraneous help, they turned to the remembrance of the generous supplies sent from Holland by its hereditary prince, William of Orange; who was already spoken of as wise and beneficent.

To him they despatched a mission for comfort and advice; and inspired with respect for the Protestant faith, to which he was a devoted adherent, he received their deputies with affability, admitted even their claims to the unfulfilled prophecy, and recommended their keeping together

in order the better to fulfil the great end of preserving the rights of their ancient church; and at the same time he granted fresh sums of money to assist them in the recovery of what they had lost.

To this advice, he added strong recommendations, that they should patiently await the proper opportunity for displaying the courage, which would undoubtedly be called for, to effect their perilous return. Comforted by this opinion, and inspired with fresh hope, the Vaudois resolved to wait quietly till a more favourable moment arrived, in which they might again wander forth in quest of a home; and Providence assisted their views by an occurrence, which to the eyes of distant observers appeared to aggravate the unhappiness of their situation.

Hostilities between the Dukes of Orleans and Neuburg occasioned the arrival of the French troops in those territories assigned to the Vaudois; and they were in consequence hastily expelled from their newly-acquired dwelling-places.

To flee into Germany, was to rush into greater danger and expose themselves to the ferocity of

their foes ; their return to Switzerland seemed denied ; and there appeared to be now no spot left for their race to dwindle away in peace.

This fresh and unexpected disaster, however, roused the compassion of their old friends, the Genevese ; who, forgetting their differences, once more extended the arms of benevolence to them, and induced the cantons of Berne and Zurich to follow their example, and offer again an asylum of charity to the Vaudois.

The misery, however, that they had experienced in their wanderings among strange lands, their acquaintance with the vicissitudes of fortune, had but increased their desire to repossess their own valleys, exiled from which, life itself was no boon ; and while every incident of their days strengthened this determination, surrounding circumstances combined to render its execution more possible.

Their friend and supporter, William of Orange, by a fortunate revolution had come to the throne of England ; and he might now extend to them the hand of protection. Their worst enemy, Louis

XIV., by espousing the cause of the dethroned James of England, was likely to involve himself in a war with that country, which would engage his attention so exclusively as to withhold it from their proceedings; and now, therefore, seemed to them the propitious moment for an attempt, which, though bold and adventurous, was one in which they resolved to succeed or to perish.

Yet, taught by former failures, they determined this time on a cautious secrecy; and therefore preserved their councils inviolate, that Savoy might remain in ignorance, and Berne offer no obstacle to their proceedings; and so well did they succeed in this, that their whole force was collected without any suspicions being raised of its intentions. They had organized their plans in the forest of Nions, and there, concealed every secret meeting till all was ripe for action.

END OF VOL. I.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 119 293 9

